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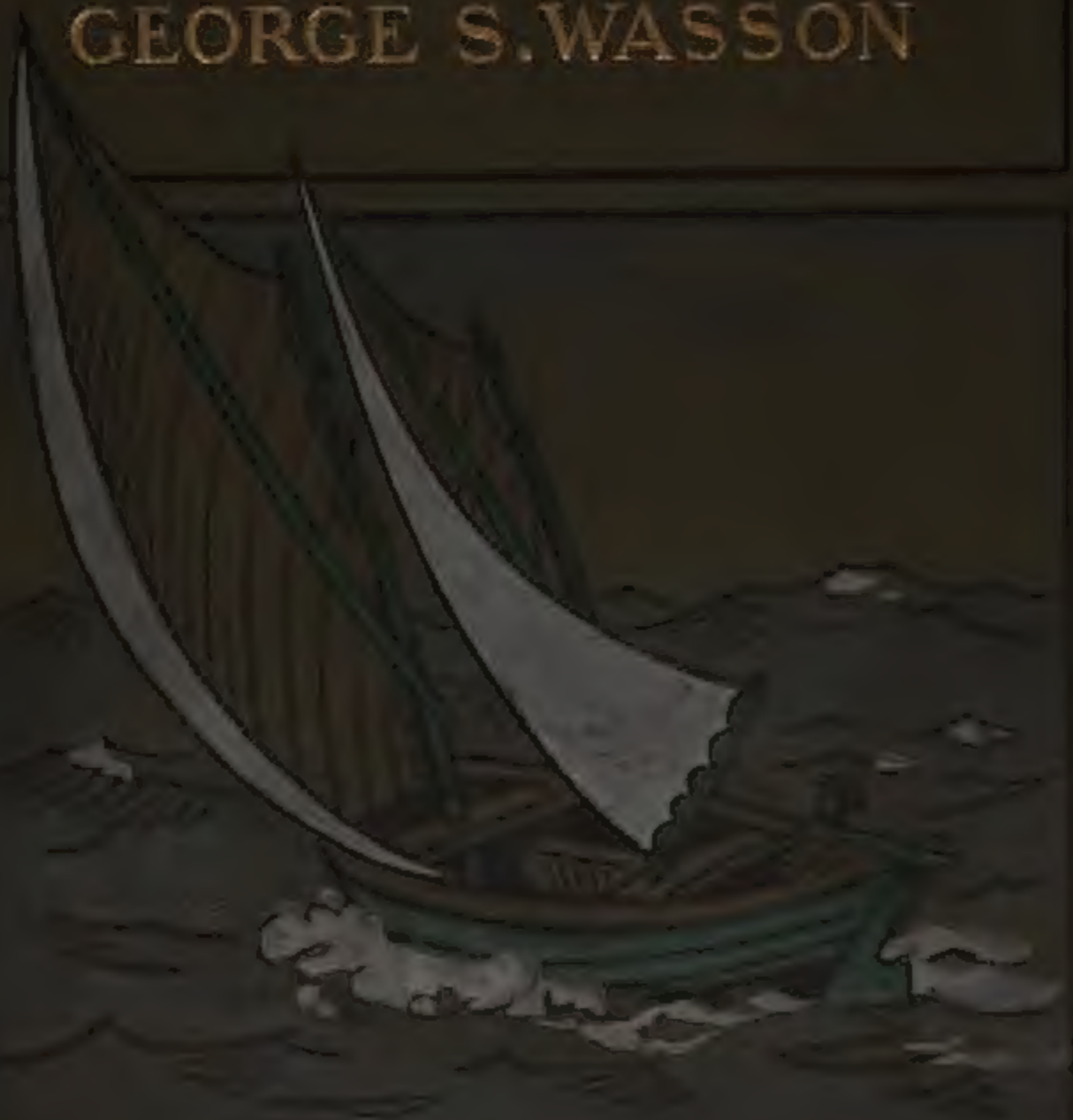
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THE GREEN SHAY

—
GEORGE S. WASSON







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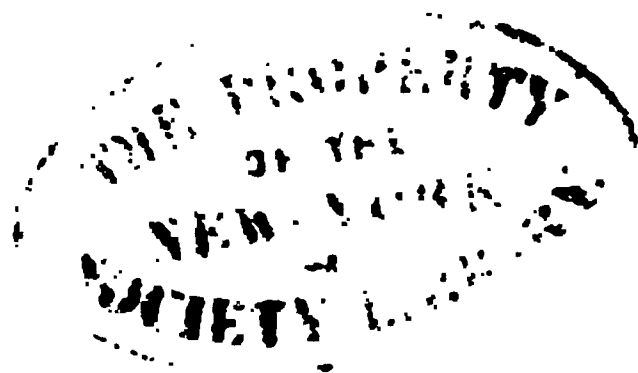
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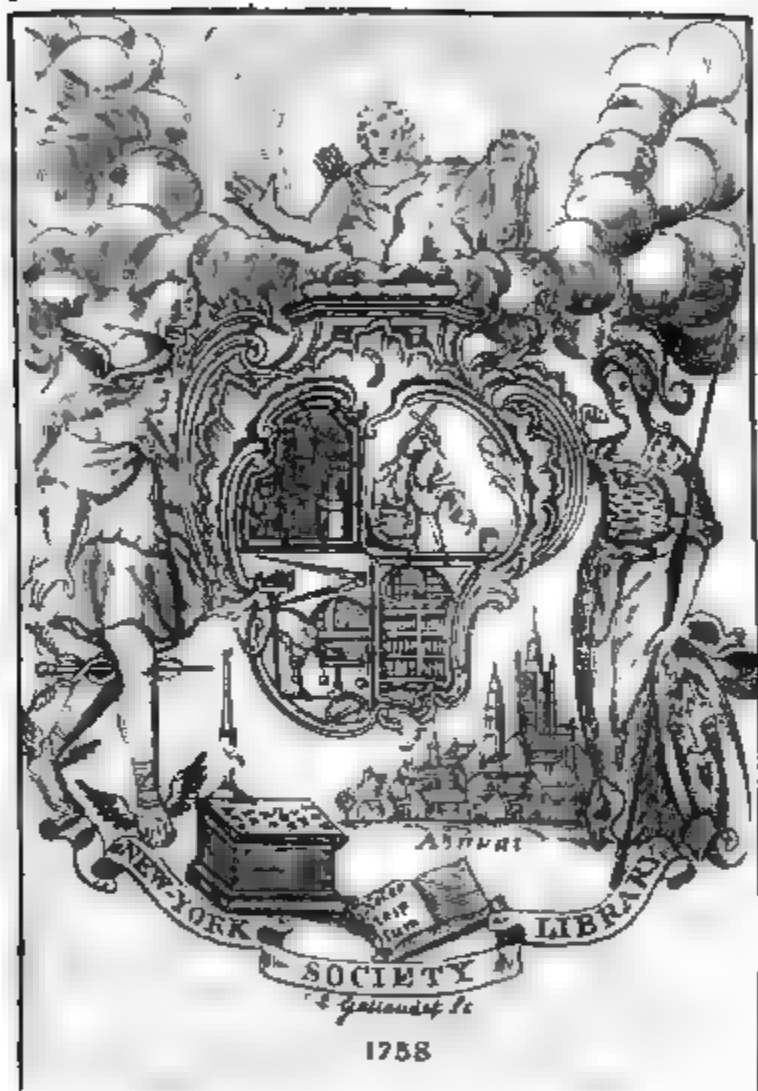
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**HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.
BOSTON AND NEW YORK**

THE GREEN SHAY





THE GREEN SHAY

BY

GEORGE S. WASSON

AUTHOR OF "CAP'N SIMEON'S STORE"

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY THE AUTHOR



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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NOTE.—Portions of Chapters I and XIII have appeared in *The Youth's Companion*, and of Chapter III in *The Outlook*. They are here reprinted with the consent of the publishers of those papers.

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I

A SUNDAY MORNING VISIT

IN the long bygone days when shipbuilding flourished at Kentle's Harbor, Obed Fairway, after some years at sea, settled down in his native place, and turning to good account an unusual mechanical ability, in time rose to the distinction of Master-builder. A few gnarly timbers of weather-beaten oak lying in the waving grass of the deserted shipyard were now the only relics of the ancient industry, but Obed Fairway still retained his title in the village, and though also known as Uncle Obed, was more commonly spoken of as Master Fairway.

On a Sunday morning near the close of summer, Master Fairway, tall and stooping, somewhat stiff in the joints, but still vigorous, drew a pair of carefully leathered oars from beneath the steps of his kitchen door, and followed a well-worn path among overladen apple-trees down to the adjacent shore.

The clean-shaven old man was in his regulation

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Sunday attire of black "pants" and partially buttoned vest. He wore a collarless white cotton shirt with bulging starched bosom, and having on this occasion escaped from the house without the customary post-prandial sponging at the hands of his women folks, bore on both vest and bosom distinct traces of baked beans. According to a family tradition, at the marriage of a dear sister many years before, Obed Fairway had donned a stiff collar and tie, both of which before the minister had left the house he removed, never again to be tolerated.

His feet, cased in heavy blue stockings, were thrust into a pair of brown sea-slippers worn down at the heels into that comfortably loose condition in which they clucked aloud at every step. From one ear a small clot of dried lather hung pendant; as usual, several slight cuts contributed towards Uncle Obed's Sabbath day appearance, and the high cheek-bones of his kindly old face shone in the warm sun with an unmistakable Sunday morning lustre.

The tide was barely half-flood, and it required no little exertion to urge his great wall-sided dory down the rude launch-ways of spruce poles secured to the rough beach by heavy barnacle-covered stones. Why Master Fairway so often went to the labor of launching this unwieldy craft in order to visit points close at hand, and much easier reached by land, was

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always a mooted question at the Harbor ; but as if by instinct he took to the great yellow dory, though his objective point at this time was merely a dismantled old schooner lying alongside a tumble-down wharf scarcely a gunshot distant.

This old vessel was at present the sole survivor of a numerous coasting fleet once bearing the name of Kentle's Harbor upon their square sterns. In early youth Obed Fairway had helped to build her ; he had seen her earn comfortable livings for many different townsmen in the old palmy days of coasting, and during the more recent years of its decay had seen the present owner struggle long and hard against fate in the attempt to continue a business which had unfitted him for any other.

For several seasons the old vessel had now remained stripped of sails beside the dilapidated wharf, and though for lack of other home Captain 'Lijah Trunnel still lived alone in her high deck-house aft, yet green things sprouted in the seams of her rotting deck, and the tides ebbed and flowed in her steaming hold.

Unfortunate as Captain Trunnel was in holding such property, he was to be envied the possession of a sanguine temperament which even in recent years refused to be downed by adversity. Captain 'Lijah clung to the belief that lumber freights would

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again “pick up” to a point where his little vessel would once more earn him a living, and in spite of all contrary advice, continually laid out upon her such sums as he could spare from a small pension, and wages sometimes earned at different work about the place.

Throughout Kentle’s Harbor it was well understood that the old schooner Elizabeth was now gone beyond repair, — was dead, in truth, as the occupation in which she was so long engaged, and that in failing to recognize this fact her light-hearted old owner chiefly showed the effect of his years.

For some time past, however, Captain Trunnel had confined his superficial repairs to the vessel’s top-sides, saying that later he would again attend to her bottom, but that meanwhile the tide kept her sweet by freely flowing in and out. By degrees though, it was noticed that he abandoned all work upon the forward part of the vessel, where oakum again hung in long shreds from the seams, and paint everywhere cleaved from her rough plank.

But around the high deck-house aft, Captain Trunnel took a decided stand. The house itself he kept well painted and tight, and from a trough on top in which he constantly placed specially prepared food, the birds fed in great numbers. The quarter-deck still looked sound and weather-proof;



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while regularly each spring stout 'Lijah Trunnel hung for hours suspended by a tackle over his vessel's old-fashioned stern, and laboriously retraced with white paint the arched inscription, "Elizabeth of Kentle's Harbor." Stubbornly contesting every inch of his forced retreat towards the stern, like the garrison of a besieged fortress, the doughty old seaman had at last fallen back to his citadel, and here, armed and equipped with rusty calking tools and chisel, with paint-pot and brush, he seemed at present to defy the ravages of time.

Master Fairway and some others were in the habit of making social calls upon their old-time friend and schoolmate of the Liz; but on this Sunday morning Obed Fairway seemed to have in addition some definite object in view. Smoke issuing from the cabin aft showed that Captain Trunnel was undoubtedly at home, but instead of at once seeking him after boarding the schooner, Master Fairway mounted her rail and cautiously began to ascend the main shrouds.

The ratlines were in no condition to inspire confidence, and he eyed each one sharply before bringing his weight upon it. When two thirds of the distance aloft he paused, and gazed intently across the harbor to the eastward. Then he took another step or two upward, and having at length adjusted

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his spectacles with one hand, again looked steadily towards the eastern shore and the islands beyond. After some moments, being apparently satisfied with the result of his climb, he descended to the deck and went aft into the cabin.

Pursy old Captain Trunnel had just finished a most generous repast of cod's head smother. He now sat tilted far back in a creaking chair with hairy chest bared as a result of his hot meal, and his thick mop of grizzled hair more than usually stirred up, as if from a severe mental struggle. Captain 'Lijah's wide-spreading beard began immediately below his twinkling little black eyes, and outside his blue flannel shirt reached exactly to the third and last white china button thereof. Inside, there was to all appearances ample material for another beard, though flattened and compressed by confinement, like the matted contents of a hair mattress.

Among the dishes on the table before him lay a huge pair of rusty calipers, a yard-stick, and several crumpled sheets of grease-spotted paper covered with figures and various straggling devices.

"Right plumb into the drawrin' this mornin', ain't ye, dear?" Master Fairway remarked, as he took out his pipe. "Wisht you'd turn to and draft out a view of me while you got your hand in!"

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"Obed," said Captain Trunnel, not heeding this pleasantry; "Obed," he said with unwonted gravity, "there 's been a plague-gone rat aboard o' me this week."

"That so?" said Obed. "Liable to be, ain't they? It's seldom ever I seen ary vessel where there wa'n't none."

"I never once had ary rat aboard o' me afore in God's world, not to my knowing!" declared Captain Trunnel. "I always made my brags the old Liz never knowed what rats was. That extry high run of tides we had here a short spell ago must drowned 'em out of this old w'arft, so 's they went to work and shun aboard o' me on them breast-lines. That's all the way ever I can account for 'em gittin' holt so-fash."

"Well, you," said Obed, "ef you 've got ary rat aboard of ye, you 'd full better jest leave him be, in room of tryin' to drive him. 'T ain't anyways likely a few rats will do ye no great hurt. You would n't feel over and above easy to sight ary rat leavin' of ye and shinnin' ashore again, prob'ly?"

"Well, no, I won't say as I should," the Captain admitted. "Ary one of them Grommetses could n't never be coaxed into shipping aboard o' me again, ef ever they got wind one single sol'tary old rat had went to work and left this hooker! But there,

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you!" he added more cheerfully, "never mind; cherries 'll soon be ripe! The way I figger it, there wa'n't only one plague-gone old rat come aboard o' me anyways, and I cal'late I'm well shet of him, now. It's nigh onto a fortni't's time sence I fust commenced to misdoubt whether or no there wa'n't a rat aboard o' me here. The way it worked, Obed, all of a sudden I commenced to miss my dish-rags off'n the locker yonder. The fust time or two I never thought no great on't, for the very reason that Joel Kentleses dog went to work and eat up quite a few of them same rags for me last winter. Seems 's though he was always ter'ble partial to 'em, someways or other. He 'd always and forever take and make a bee-line for that locker quick's ever Joel fetched him aboard o' me, and jes' sure's ever there happened to be one of them dish-swabs anyways in reach, he 'd down her quick as scat!"

"Sho!" exclaimed Master Fairway. "Must called 'em consid'ble dainty little tid-bits, like!"

"That's the way it looked, now that 's the fact, you!" said Captain Trunnel. "But there," he went on, "that dog of his'n made out to git killt Fourth o' July day, you know, so come to think it over a little dite, I commenced to wonder ef it wa'n't some plague-gone old rat was making so free with them swabs. Bimeby I see signs of him into

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the grub-locker there, and fust thing ever I knowed he was plumb into one of them pies your woman sent down aboard o' me. Come to take and rummage around and overhaul the dunnage here a mite, set-fire ef I did n't find a big rat-hole eat chock through the forrard bulkhead there, un'neath the bunk behind my chist.

"Godfrey mighty!" thinks I, "Guess we better take strict account of sich works right off! Nothin' like having things set down in black and white, so I jest turned to and drawed me up this 'ere paper. Kind of rat-account, I call her. On this side I set down ag'in 'em three, and I won't say but what four complete dish-swabs; one fust-rate punkin pie (charged 'em with the whole pie, you see, bein' as I took and hove the rest-part of her overboard); half a dozen potatoes, be the same more or less; one big hole right through bulkhead forrard, and so forth and so on. On this other side I cal'late this mornin' to take and give 'em credit with one extra big old swinger of a rat!"

"Oho, then you made out to snub him up all standin', did ye?" asked Obed.

"I cal'late he ain't liable to trouble no more dish-swabs for folks, anyways," replied Captain Trunnel. "There was consid'ble to it, though, afore ever I gafted onto him. Quick's ever I found that

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hole, I frogged straight up to Abner Grommetses place there, and borried me his trap. I took and baited her all up nice and temptin' like, and sot her three nights running, but they never tetched of her once."

"Why had n't you turned to and hove in one o' them same dish-mops of yourn to toll 'em?" demanded Master Fairway. "I don't doubt but what them rats would fairly fit one another for the fust chance to git holt of her!"

"Jest exactly the very thing I done!" answered Captain 'Lijah. "But besides that though, I went to work and hove in a big chunk of cheese all toasted up good and cripsy, and a slice of pie, and a couple of jest as pretty Baldwins as ever you see sence Adam was an oakum-boy; so thinks I, 'There now, neighbor, ef there ain't a reg'lar tuck-out for ye, and no mistake!' Dunno what more I could done, unlessn I'd give him a napkin, but seems 's though he never tetched of a thing again."

"I see then he was one of them plague-gone knowin' old reynucks, plain enough, but still it sort of went agin the grain like, to give in how he knowed sich a great sight more 'n me, too, so I took and bought me this 'ere other make of a trap there to the store, — different git-up altogether, you see she is. Some on 'em allow how this make will ketch

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herself chock-a-block full of rats in a night-time, and not half try, neither. Well, so I turned to and baited her all up complete jest accordin' to directions, and sot *her* three nights runnin' too, but honest Injun, you, blame' ef I believe old rat ever so much as come a-near her at all. 'Oho!' thinks I, 'Cunnin' enough, ain't ye, Mister? You jest cal'late you're a consid'ble big herb, now don't ye, though!' Thinks I, 'Guess we'll take and try you on another tack, my fine feller;' so yesterday aft'noon I up and borried me Mis' Marshy Kentleses big Maltee there, and I cal'late she done the trick for me right chock up to the handle."

"Nothin' like a good up-and-comin' style o' cat, after all," said Master Fairway. "You're tol'ble satisfied she grafted onto him, then?"

"Oh, yes, for sure! She must nabbed him in good shape!" the Captain replied. "Tell ye jest how I come to know for certain she done so. Quick's ever I fetched that Maltee aboard o' me, I says to myself, 's I, 'Now we don't want no manner of guess-work about this 'ere,' so I jest took and clapped them calipers onto that cat the very first thing ever I done. Accordin' to calipers, she measured jest an even six inch through her in the biggest part; that was takin' of her up and down like; take her crossways, and a grain risin' of five inch was the best you'd

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git. Then I lit me up a lamp and crawled chock in un'neath of that starboard bunk there, and I made that rat-hole to be hard onto two and a half inch in bigness. The aidges was chowed up a little mite ragged, but she 'd average a good two and a half all right.

“Now mind ye, Obed, I was jest foxy enough not to take and give that Maltee no great sight of a supper last night, not by no means; jest merely enough to keep soul and body together overnight, you might say, but this morning quick's I ever turned out, come to put them calipers onto her again, and she went a plumb eight and a half inch to a dot! Here you have it all ciphered out plain as the nose on your face,” said Captain Trunnel, reaching for another sheet of paper on the table. “Average bigness of rat-hole acrost her, two and a half inch. “Bigness of Mis' Kentleses cat the time she come aboard o' me yesterday, six inch. “Bigness of Mis' Kentleses cat this morning the very second I turned out of my bunk, eight and a half inch, nigh's ever you'll git it! Figgers won't lie, they always used to tell me. There lays the Maltee behind the stove there, round as a mack'rel, and takin' things easy as old Tilley's shoe; ain't even yipped for no breakfast yit!”

“Well, 'Lijah,” said Master Fairway with a some-

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what incredulous smile, "figgers was always your best holt from the time you was the bigness of a trawl-kag; all is, I hope they won't commence to fool ye at this day o' the world. Now I'll tell you, dear, what fetched me 'round aboard of ye this morning. You ain't forgot the works there was to this Harbor that last wrack ever we had, — the little Rockland limer, you know, that struck on the 'Fiddler's Pup,' and like to burnt up, — the time Cap'n Sheave made his brags how he cleared three hunnerd out of it?"

"Oh, set-fire, yes, I rec'lect it all right enough," said Captain Trunnel. "Ain't that all of a piece with the works there is to 'most every wrack, now-days? Jasp Sheave and a whole raft of 'em here to this Harbor now-days cal'late to git a reg'lar gold mind out of every wrack we have. I would n't wonder no great to see castaways attackted and massacred with sandbags yit!"

"Sich works is a cryin' shame, and no two ways about it!" Obed Fairway declared vehemently. "It's got so bad now-days I feel kind of shame-faced like, to put the hail of 'Kentle's Harbor' on the stern of my little hooker, there."

"Godfrey mighty!" cried Captain Trunnel, "Fur's that goes, I ain't so sure as our folks will rob and steal from wracks so much sooner than

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what they will 'most anywheres else 'round here now'days! You jest once let a man git his vessel ashore, or git leakin' bad, or disenabled anyways so 's to be crippled-up in proper good shape, and it's always 'Hooray, boys! Take and soak it to him for all he 's wuth; he 's no business gittin' into a scrape! Turn to and thump him out of all manner o' shape; cuff him right and left; jam him at every hand's turn,—any old way so 's not to let him get off with a red cent to his name!' Quick's ever a man stubs his toe, and gits into a tight fix anywheres the whole length of the coast hereabouts, he cal'lates to be bled at every hand's turn, and by fire! my experience is he'll seldom ever miss his cal'lation, neither! Never mind, though; cherries'll soon be ripe! Life is nothin' only jes' so much comic misery, anyways. Quick's ever I start the old Liz going again, I cal'late to have me a big gatling gun mounted atop o' the house here, and keep her all loaded up and ready to touch off every blame' time I harbor."

"Good land, you! 'Tain't no sich great of a laughin' matter, as I see," said Master Fairway, who was inclined to take life much more seriously than his old friend. "What I want mostly now is to try and head off sich works a little dite, ef we can. It's coming on the fall o' the year pretty quick now,

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and the weather will soon be gettin' catchy. Yesterday I took and rowed over acrost to the Life Savin' Station and see Cap'n Truman in regards to signalizin' of him someways the next time there 's trouble in here. They never can see what's going on in here to this Harbor from the Station, you know, for the reason that Kentle's Head cuts off the view complete, and the way the thing works, jest as likely by the time them Station folks git wind of trouble in here, the mischief is all done. We got a plenty here now'days that git in their work on a disabled vessel so quick 't will 'most make your head swim! They put me in mind of a school o' dogfish, that always take and tackle one of their own kind the very secont he gits anyways hurt."

"That's a fact, too!" agreed Captain Trunnel. "The dogfish in 'em sticks right out good and plain them times! And the thing of it is, they 're raisin' up a lot of krawm¹ that's goin' to be wuss 'n ever they are, the way I look at it!"

"That's how it's worked now for years. That's jest what has killt us dead as a herrin'!" said Obed. "The heft of the old seed-folks lays up back o' the meetin'-house; all the young fry that amounts to shucks has to git out of this for a livin', and the krawm that stops to home here

¹ Rubbish, refuse.

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breeds a mess of spawn'd that ain't wuth the powder 't would take to blow 'em to — well, call it bally-hack! What I want you should do right off, afore another pore devil stubs his toe a-tryin' to find a hole in the beach¹ the next heavy breeze o' wind we have, — and we're liable to catch a reg'lar old 'apple-shaker' 'most any day now, — what I want you should do is to take and reeve off a set of signal-halliards on your main-topmast here, and have a colors all ready to bend on at double-quick time."

"Sure you can sight my topmasts from over acrost there?" asked Captain Trunnel.

"The two of 'em show up all clear chock down below your mastheads, right through the gap in the woods where Cap'n Sheave commenced to strip the Head last winter," said. Obed. "I've been aloft on your main-riggin' a piece jest now till I fetched the Station out full bigness. Of course, come to take it anyways thick weather, and signalizin' this way won't be no account, but unless'n it should blow a livin' gale o' wind, so's they can't hold ary boat up to it, Cap'n Truman says he'll be acrost here along of his men quick's ever he sees colors flyin' aboard of you. That's all the way I know to fetch him over when he's wanted the most."

¹ To make a harbor.

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"Godfrey mighty!" cried Captain Trunnel, slapping his fat thigh emphatically, "it's a grand good plan! I call it a plague-gone good idee to keep right in cahoots with 'em that way! I only hope it won't have to go and shut in dungeon thick-a-fog on us the fust time ever we try to work the thing. To-morrow I'll find me a boy to shin my topmast and reeve off some halyards in good shape, ag'in the time they're wanted. But look a' here, Obed," he said as Master Fairway rose to leave, "seems's though you was lookin' a little grain streaked like in the face this morning. I wisht you'd let me give you a little small dose of 'Universalis' Pacific;' she'd help you out amazin'ly."

"You take and hold your breath till I do, will ye?" said Obed Fairway ungraciously. "It's a good thirty year now you've been tryin' off and on to pizen me with that plaguey old 'Pacific' of yours, and ain't made out to yit, though."

"Smarter men than ever you be have doctored up with 'Universalis' Pacific' afore now, and called her a complete med'cine, too," said Captain Trunnel with dignity, as his old friend left him.

II

THE FAIRWAYS AND THE YOUNG SKIPPER

IN a workshop behind his comfortable little home near the shore at Kentle's Harbor, Master Fairway still labored in a leisurely way at building or repairing small craft, while his services were often sought for odd jobs upon the few small fishing vessels yet owned in the place, or frequenting it for shelter.

Time was when full-rigged ships, built, officered, and manned by natives of the Harbor, constantly carried the flag into foreign ports, but these vessels and most of those who went in them had been gone for years. Of the rising generation, scarcely half a dozen had ever seen a square-rigged vessel of any kind.

The coasting fleet had now dwindled away to the vanishing point, and farming in this region was with some reason regarded as but another name for starving. To some extent there still remained the fishing, and chiefly by way of helping burly young Asa Kentle assume control as skipper, Master Fairway had been led to invest a portion of his

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savings in a small fishing schooner called the Good Intent, for as far as his means would permit, it was a matter of principle with the benevolent old man to encourage deserving youngsters of the Harbor to remain at home, instead of going abroad to seek a livelihood.

Asa Kentle was the son of an old friend long since lost at sea. From early boyhood he had been obliged to shift for himself, and, like all of the name, had taken to the water like a duck. Brought up in the forecastle of a fisherman, his schooling was of the slightest, yet in spite of this, and the constant example of licentiousness and improvidence offered both afloat and ashore, Asa Kentle at twenty-five was not only in general much better informed than most other young men of the place, but was clean of mind and body, and while not in the least niggardly, was known to take good care of the money earned at his constant hard work. Besides this, as good Master Fairway often remarked with pride, the comely, fair-haired young fisherman was one of the few men at the Harbor, either young or old, who had never been seen drunk under any circumstances.

In Captain Abner Grommet's sail-loft, where numbers of elderly citizens were in the habit of assembling daily, Master Fairway often cited stag-

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gering facts in support of the somewhat unpopular theory that many coast towns of New England had sadly degenerated since the old days when shipping furnished a worthy calling for all.

That the running down process was due to any general deterioration of the native stock he would by no means assert, but that many years' continued sapping of the best young blood in certain localities had left a residue with scarcely salt enough to save it, Master Fairway of late years stoutly maintained.

He had no reason to regret his good turns toward Asa Kentle, for the young man seemed to appreciate the situation fully, and what was equally to the point, came of the best fishing ancestry. In helping Asa Kentle to "take up" the little schooner Good Intent, Master Fairway never lost sight of the fact that successful deep-sea fishermen are born and not made. For generations back the family of Kentles had been most creditably identified with the business in all its branches, and when Asa himself was barely in his teens, he could rattle off the intricate "marks" for all neighboring fishing grounds without a moment's hesitation, greatly to the admiration of his elders.

During the War of 1812, his grandfather, Solomon Kentle, was skipper of a new fishing vessel be-

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longing to rich Squire Sheave of the Harbor. On a passage to Boston in midwinter, his vessel was captured in Ipswich Bay by an English privateersman, who, on finding the weather fast growing too boisterous for sending his prize to Halifax, decided to burn her. Solomon Kentle, however, protested against this act with so much effect, that at length his captor offered to give him back the schooner provided he would go on board and take the chance of getting her into port *alone*. The privateer was short-handed, and not one of the skipper's own men would he allow to accompany him under any circumstances. It was then nearly night; a north-east snowstorm had set in, and owing to the greed of her owner, the schooner had been loaded out of all reason. Solomon Kentle accepted the offer instantly. His watch and testament were returned to him, and just as the long winter night was shutting down on the stormy sea, his own men and captors alike shook his hand, and left him as one soon doomed to certain death. Two days later Solomon Kentle crept into the Harbor with his battered craft, and for his valor was rewarded by Squire Sheave to the extent of a hat from his great store on the wharf.

Not one of Skipper Asa Kentle's intimates doubted for a moment that he would have accepted

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all the risks taken by his grandfather on this well-known occasion, or that he would have succeeded in bringing his vessel through them as successfully. Under his charge the schooner Good Intent paid her several owners satisfactorily from the first, but soon after he began "keeping company" in earnest with Master Fairway's niece Clara, the dividends were observed to increase materially.

This agreeable condition of affairs was not unnaturally ascribed to the young skipper's expressed intention of being married as soon as his financial condition would warrant. With this new incentive to work, the Good Intent was fitted out in the spring and started on a trip south to meet the mackerel while the shores of the Harbor were still fringed with windrows of snow and ice heaped up by the winter tides. Returning from a successful season, she was the first to appear with a "pulpit" rigged on her bowsprit-end for harpooning swordfish, and these having taken themselves off the coast with the first autumnal storms, the old schooner was now being prepared for the regular winter work of trawling for cod and haddock.

Young Skipper Asa Kentle was fast fulfilling his destiny, and making a reputation for himself as an expert "fish-killer." Chances to ship with him were now eagerly sought, and being thus able

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to take his pick for a crew, the Good Intent was this season manned by five men, all of whom he knew to be honest and sober, and also to possess the prime requisite of being "fishy."

By Thanksgiving, the annals of fishing at Kentle's Harbor furnished no parallel for the number of dories carried on deck by a craft of the schooner's tonnage, or for the tubs of trawls per man regularly set by her crew on the various fishing grounds outside. Asa Kentle's time was necessarily so taken up with the arduous work in which he was now engaged, that visits to his betrothed were somewhat irregular, and often short, though he lost no opportunity of slipping down to the lilac-screened cottage where she lived.

Clara Fairway, Master Fairway's niece and charge, had lived from early youth with her childless uncle and aunt, whom long since she had grown to regard as her own parents. She was now a rather tall, well-developed girl of twenty, with a wealth of brown hair, cheeks of a russety bloom, and as honest a pair of pure gray eyes as ever looked the world fairly in the face from between dark curling eyelashes.

When Miss Clara Fairway met young men upon the road or elsewhere, she never felt it necessary either to avert or cast down her pretty eyes in in-

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dication of excessive female modesty. When she shook a man's hand it was in such a way as to leave no sort of doubt in his mind as to whether he had been gripped by a strong and warm human hand, or whether his own had inadvertently come in contact with a limp skein of yarn.

Besides being well skilled in household duties by her aunt, Clara Fairway was fortunate in having secured an education away from home noticeably better than that afforded in schools taught exclusively by shrill-voiced girls of the village, who in turn held their positions merely as a makeshift until they could get married, or find more congenial employment. From most of these transient young school-ma'ams Clara Fairway differed to a marked extent, but in no respect, perhaps, more strikingly than in her manner of speech.

Parrot-like, the school children of the place learned to repeat certain rudimentary rules of grammar from teachers who glaringly broke these very rules in the teaching, for they, like their pupils, invariably talked what they heard at home, and in the homes of Kentle's Harbor the rule was not only to murder the King's English at sight, but to mutilate the remains almost beyond recognition.

But through some innate promptings, Clara Fairway had herself risen in many ways superior

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to her surroundings. She knew that her uncle and aunt both "talked Kentle's Harbor " to the last degree, and sometimes bantered them on various turns of speech which, although reasonably free from herself, she still loved dearly to hear.

Clara's accomplishments were few. She had once essayed painting in oil colors, and at thirty-five cents a lesson went through a course of instruction in art from a girl acquaintance, who while working in a large town had expended fifty cents each for twenty-four lessons from a lady artist whose representations of autumnal foliage were greatly admired. This artist it was said, had received a thorough grounding in her chosen profession while spending a winter near Boston some years previous. Once each week, for no less than three months, and at an outlay of one dollar per visit, in the studio of a master whose works had hung in the Art Club Exhibitions, this lady had undoubtedly been privileged to inhale a genuine Art Atmosphere of something over eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit, in which ancient cigarette smoke contended for supremacy with oily fumes arising from numerous priceless gems on surrounding easels.

In spite of such advantages, there was that in Clara Fairway which thus far had restrained her from framing examples of her artistic skill and

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hanging them upon the walls of her aunt's Front Room. The tin paint-box had been laid aside for over a year, and even her palette was nowhere to be discovered decorated with ribbons, among the furnishings of the house.

Like all other self-respecting householders of the Harbor, Master Fairway had provided his home with a cabinet organ, and upon this now somewhat asthmatic instrument Clara often performed for his edification. She was given to attending meeting during the uncertain periods when there was preaching at the Harbor ; she belonged to a sewing-circle, and to a certain temperance organization which she plainly saw had no more appreciable effect against the prevailing drunkenness than the prohibitory law. Clara Fairway was also probably the only female member of the Kentle's Harbor Literary Association who had not at some time succumbed to the allurements of canvassing the town and surrounding country for soap orders.

In short, Master Fairway's niece was a sweet, warm-hearted country girl, uncommonly pretty, and none the less attractive from owning, in her own right, extensive tracts of as yet unimproved land in the vicinity. While she loved Kentle's Harbor with an intensity which made her almost morbidly sensitive to outside criticism of the place, she her-

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self keenly realized its latter day failings, of which none caused her more discouragement than the obvious content with which people in general accepted prevailing conditions ; a content amounting in the great majority of cases to smug complacency with the lax moral, religious, and educational status of the community at the present day. Especially in the latter respect few strangers could remain long in the place without being astounded at the number of phenomenally ignorant persons, not merely perfectly convinced that they "knew it all," but more than willing to impart instruction in it, and all its branches, on all possible occasions.

Whether the so-called New England conscience differs materially from any other potential moral sense developed outside of Yankeedom, may be open to question. That persons possessing sufficiently acute consciences still existed in the town of Kentle's Harbor can by no means be denied ; still, all things considered, to have directed a student of psychology thither to search for cases of the much talked of New England variety to-day can only be regarded in the nature of a cruel practical joke.

III

THE TRIBULATIONS OF A SEA-COAST PARISH

SOME little time previous, Captain Jasper Sheave had astonished all, and considerably shocked not a few, residents of Kentle's Harbor by championing the waning cause of religion in the village, and declaring his intention of once more having regular preaching upon Sunday.

Captain Sheave was a squat-built, red visaged man, with a length of body out of all proportion to his crooked legs. He wore stumpy chin whiskers well streaked with gray and tobacco juice, and his mouth was simply a somewhat oblique slit under a long convex upper lip. His stony, bulging eyes were set so closely together that but for a great beaked nose they might apparently have easily merged into one, and so brought the town of Kentle's Harbor into considerable prominence for producing a bow-legged Yankee Cyclops.

A grandson of the thrifty old Squire Sheave who built the store and stone wharf now occupied by himself, he inherited in full measure the Sheave traits of greed and unscrupulousness, and a relent-

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less determination to exact rather more than their pound of flesh under all circumstances. In his case, however, the long-headed business ability of the family was somewhat lacking, and, especially in later years, a noticeable loss of cunning caused him to overreach himself in several despicable schemes for money getting.

In much younger days Captain Jasper had earned his title in transporting slab-wood by sloop to Portland, but soon quitting so perilous an occupation, returned to his native heath and set himself up in the old store at the Harbor. Here there undoubtedly existed enticing opportunities for a man with his particularly greedy appetite for "trades," not only in the way of lending money among an improvident fishing population, but frequently upon the occasion of wrecks in the vicinity. For these latter windfalls, it was remarked that the Captain had a scent like a vulture.

Countless acts of meanness throughout the locality, many of moment, but many of almost inconceivable pettiness, had of late driven much trade to a newly established store, and thus still further soured his always crabbed countenance, though in the shape of mortgages, unpaid bills, and the like, Captain Jasper still held the whip hand over many customers at the Harbor.

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Although inheriting large tracts of farming and wood land, the Captain's avariciousness largely showed itself in a mania for land-grabbing, and long since he had succeeded in hoodwinking a younger brother out of his home and every foot of land he possessed. Whenever and wherever a piece of property fell into the clutches of Captain Jasper Sheave, there was sure to ensue on his part a savage dispute over boundaries. The almost inevitable result of such quarrels was that lines were shifted more or less to the Captain's advantage, and with many winks and nudges he chuckled over the affair to all whom he could buttonhole.

One of the most curious phases of Captain Sheave's nature was an apparently total unconsciousness of any moral obliquity in his multiform methods of trickery. Acts which most men, even as mean as he, would seek in some measure to conceal, he so habitually exploited and referred to as "shrewd moves," that throughout the village the phrase "shrewd move" was very commonly used in sarcastic reference to underhanded or dishonest acts.

The Sheaves now lived in a large square house, built at about the beginning of the last century by a West India merchant of the place. There were several other such houses at the Harbor, all now

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held in poor esteem, and mostly in bad repair. Commonly they were each tenanted by several families of that shifting and shiftless portion of the population which, at a day's notice, constantly piled its few goods in a hay-rack, and changed quarters.

Captain Sheave's house originally had the simple dignity and chaste ornamentation common to most dwellings of its class, but after the Captain secured it for a song at the time of his second marriage, urged by his new spouse, he soon began alterations in accordance with more modern ideas of the Harbor. Several great elms in front were at once disposed of as interfering with a close watch of the road from a certain rear window chosen by the new mistress for her very own, and large lights of glass were put in throughout the house.

The old stone steps, and the front door with its brass knocker and fanlight overhead were torn away, and in their place appeared a nondescript sort of porch covered with the usual tawdry excrescences; its roof ostensibly supported by a pair of of the most hideous and flimsy brackets with which jig-saw and lathe ever cursed a community.

A great bay-window in the same vile style was then stuck upon the side of the house next the street, and as though the desecration of the stately

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old mansion was not complete, the whole was finally painted in bands of varying width, and sight-blurring contrasts of color. Close to the glass of the new bay-window, between carefully parted lace curtains, stood a shining table belonging to what may be perhaps not improperly styled the soap order of architecture, it being one of the many such prizes of indefatigable canvassing contained in the Sheaves' inviolable Front Room. On this ornate piece of furniture an immensely thick gilt-edged book casually called the attention of passers-by to the decided literary tastes of the family, and since the sonorous tones of a new cabinet organ constantly issued from within, it was apparent that while not engaged in canvassing, the ladies of the house, at least, lived for the most part a life of elegant leisure.

On the whole, it was by no means surprising, considering Captain Jasper Sheave's well known characteristics, that when suddenly developing a hitherto totally unsuspected quality, he experienced religion in its most violent form and announced his intention of putting the moribund Harbor Parish once more upon its feet, people generally shook their heads, and regarded it in the nature of another "shrewd move."

That the parish was sorely in need of skillful

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financiering cannot be denied. In the days when there was shipping owned at the Harbor, the church certainly appeared to flourish, but now practically all that was gone, and nothing had taken its place to afford employment. True, under certain peculiarly favorable conditions elsewhere, a few small coasting vessels still managed to exist, but each year the number steadily diminished, and their rotting hulks littered nooks and corners of harbors from Quoddy Head to Sandy Hook.

With some few exceptions, young men of any ambition or energy had felt obliged to leave the town; a majority of those remaining were content to pick up a precarious living at lobstering and small boat-fishing, lounging about the wharves or certain other resorts when ashore, and getting more or less drunk at every possible opportunity. Kentle's Harbor in these latter days was undoubtedly poor, and money for a minister's salary came like drawing teeth, yet the present almost total lack of interest in the church was not to be ascribed wholly to poverty. It lay largely in the fact that in furtherance of their own ends men of unsavory reputation had assumed control of the parish till their prominence in its affairs had brought it into disrepute, and former ardent supporters, like Master Fairway and others, had almost ceased to be

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identified with it. For the paltry sum it had recently been possible to raise in the village no minister of even mediocre ability could afford to come. With a very few notable exceptions, such persons as did come and attempt to remain at the price had by their utter lack of fitness for so sacred and responsible a position merely succeeded in further weakening a cause already sick unto death.

At the Harbor, and in the country about, drunkenness had become so common as scarcely to excite remark; many unmarried couples lived together as man and wife, separating, re-uniting, and again changing partners at pleasure, while dozens of children grew to manhood unable to read or write. Kentle's Harbor, in fact, was but one of numerous small communities now scattered over a great portion of New England which were gradually but surely going to the bad for want of real stimulation and help. Meanwhile, elsewhere throughout the great prosperous country went on bravely the glorious work of raising immense sums for sending devoted and self-sacrificing missionaries into the uttermost parts of the earth.

Over the sagging wooden steps of the ancient meeting-house at Kentle's Harbor, and covering deep the straggling path leading up from the road, the snow lay undisturbed all winter. As the cold

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Northern spring grudgingly advanced, it settled slowly away until from under huge drifts in the little graveyard behind the church appeared quaint urns and weeping willows chiseled on reeling stones of slate over many a God-fearing old-time skipper of the Harbor. But the eaves ran at noonday till the snow was gone, and plantains and dandelions grew thickly in the still untrodden path winding up to the rotting steps.

Allured by the promise of three hundred dollars salary, and donation parties at short intervals, the last regular incumbent bravely stood at his post for nearly six months. For various reasons he failed to collect the promised salary, and like many predecessors was obliged to eke out a bare living by haying and working at odd jobs about the village, till at length, unable to support his family longer in the tumble-down parsonage, he vacated the premises one foggy night, leaving in lieu of other farewell discourse, firmly impaled upon each remaining picket of the dilapidated front fence, one and one-half dozen yellow saleratus biscuits, the gross receipts of the latest donation party.

For many ensuing weeks the Harbor meeting-house remained closed except during the short stay of callow divinity students from a distant seminary, who came and spoke their little pieces and

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went with the blueberry season, and also excepting the memorable Sunday afternoon when Captain Jasper Sheave himself mounted the pulpit and held forth to an assemblage largely composed of persons indebted to him at his store or otherwise.

So matters stood until, as a result of much laborious correspondence on the Captain's part, a shabbily dressed, well-nigh decrepit old man arrived by boat one day as a candidate for the vacant position, but, before having an opportunity of addressing the people, was bedridden by rheumatism, and so remained when, just as the fog was solemnly creeping in from sea at the close of a brooding autumn day, certain citizens gathered in Abner Grommet's sail-loft noticed a small white sloop drifting slowly into the harbor.

Her sole occupant seemed to be an elderly man in a long black coat, and as he anchored his craft in mid-channel, a battered, canvas-covered spy-glass was brought to bear upon him by Captain Grommet.

"That's that tormented old mish'nary feller again, ef I ain't mistaken!" he exclaimed, handing the glass to Captain Jasper Sheave. "Prob'ly he cal'lates to turn to and preach here Sunday. A man must owe hisself consid'ble of a bad grutch

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to take and scull 'round these rocks all soul alone into that boat same 's he doos, come now !”

“ Oh, wall, you ! It 's a trade, same 's everything else,” said Captain Sheave, after a long look. “ That 's him, I don't misdoubt. I been trying to work it so 's to git him here again for some time sence. Let him go to work and preach all he wants. He 'll come in jest now handy as a pocket into a shirt.”

“ Who in tunket is it backs up the old creetur', anyways ?” asked Master Fairway. “ Plague take his pelt, when the likes of him gits a living out of preachin', seems 's though there 'd ought to be an openin' for 'most any of us, and resk it ! Ever sence that little confab him and me had together the last time ever he showed up here, I 've kind of sot him down for a reg'lar-built old gas-bag, and them that turns to and foots his bills must love to heave away money a sight wuss 'n I do !”

“ Set-fire, you !” Captain Sheave exclaimed. “ What sense is they, takin' on so-fashion ? Ef there 's folks wants to take and square his bills a-sendin' of him 'round this way, I don't see no call to kick, now you can bate ! 'Tain't the least mite of a bill of expense to us folks, and we make out to git us a Sunday's preachin' free gratis for nothin', in room of not having none at all !”

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“Preachin’ for nothin’ be jiggered!” retorted Master Fairway. “I’d lieveser pay out a little something for my preachin’ ef ever there was ary preacher struck this Harbor now’days was any-ways wuth listening to, but I never call it no great object to go and set under some pore old has-been that’s got no buckram left into him, nor yit to hear one o’ these ’ere young squirts same’s they ship down here summer-times to preach out their grub and lodgin’! That last poor little shoat we had here wa’n’t scarcely old enough to wear galluses, anyways, and I never figgered them kind was over and above fittin’ to tell us no great sight in regards to the hereafter, nor nothin’ else neither, that we ain’t knowin’ to a’ready! I been knockin’ ’round down here most too many years now to take and swallow them little boys’ say-so right ker-plunk, leave alone askin’ for no more sich!”

“I ain’t the leastways anxious to hear no more of your blasphemis rubbidge,” snapped Captain Sheave.

“Sho now, dear!” said Obed Fairway coolly, “I cal’late to out with it, all the same, Cap’n. ‘Speak your mind, ef you never sell a fish;’ that’s the doctrine I go by. You don’t make out to be all the one that has any say about the meetin’-house, ef you *are* runnin’ of her pretty much the way you

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want, now'days. Two year ago come spring-time, when this old reynuck of a mish'nary was here last, there had n't been no preachin' here for a dog's age, maybe you rec'lect. Old mish'nary he come driftin' in at noon-time of a Friday, I know, and dropped killick right abreast of my house, there. All soul alone, he was, and right in the thick of a fog-mull, same 's now. Well, sir, he come in same 's to-day noon-time, we'll say ; let go his little old humdurgan,¹ or killick, or anchor, or whatever it is he clubs² her with ; he let her go right under foot, took and snugged up things on deck all tanto,³ and went below and turned in, I cal'lated, for he never once showed his head out of the cud that we see till a-near supper-time to-morrow night ; goin' on two days' time that was, you see.

"Then he come paddlin' ashore into his small skift, clim up over them big high laidges front of the house there, and wanted I should tell him who had the most say about the meetin'-house. Wall, of course I give him to understand that *you* was called the biggest herb we had here now, Cap'n, but then I up and says to him like this : 'Elder,' 's I, 'come right in, dear,' 's I, 'and have some supper along of our folks. We're only jest

¹ Anchor made from a stone lashed in a forked limb of a tree.

² To "club" a vessel is to anchor her.

³ Neatly.

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this very secont settin' down. Be tickled to death to have ye stop!' 's I.

"No! No-sir-ee! He wa'n't noways hungry, and could n't stop, allowin' he *was* hungry! Must be steppin' right along up the road any old how!

"'Wall, look a' here, you!' 's I. 'Don't, Elder,' 's I, 'don't for king's sakes go to stoppin' no longer all soul alone out there aboard that little smoke-boat o' yourn! That ain't no kind of way to live; you ain't got room to sling a cat aboard there,' 's I. 'Turn to and fetch your dunnage right ashore to-night quick's ever you can, and put up along of us! We got any God's quantity of room and to spare!' 's I.

"But no! You could n't budge him a hair, no-ways, and finally the woman and Clarry they come traipsin' outdoors the two of 'em, and done *their* dingdest, too, a-coaxin' of him. 'Whatever should possess ye, Elder,' says the woman, 'to take and do for yourself all soul alone aboard your boat these two days that way, when there's folks would love dearly to have ye put up along of 'em ashore here?'

"But seems 's though their talk never amounted to nothin' neither, for all in the world he 'd do, he 'd jest up and fetch them horrid groans like, of his'n, till bimeby finally he turned to and drawed down

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his old mug out of all manner of shape, and says, 's he, 'When I'm out there aboard o' my boat,' 's he, 'I feel sure I'm all alone along of my God,' 's he, — them 's jest his very words, — but then he 'lowed how ef he should take and stop ashore on the main any time at all, he was like to git hisself smirched and s'iled someways or 'nother rubbin' up ag'in our folks, and so he figgered it stood him in hand to stop aboard, in room of taking no chances ashore here!

“ ‘Wall, wall, you!’ thinks I to myself right off, ‘ef you ain’t a dandy to go mish’naryin’ ’round, and no mistake! Godfrey mighty!’ thinks I, ‘I’ve run afoul of folks afore now that was you might call nasty-nice, but be jigged ef ever I seen anything on two legs yit would commence to tetch you, Mister What’s-your-name! Guess,’ thinks I, ‘on the whole you better a dinged sight stick her out right aboard your boat where you be! We’re a consid’-ble weeked lot here to this Harbor, that much I’ll give in to ye, but be blowed ef I cal’late you’re the boy to help us out no great a-preachin’, and reask it!’ I never went a-nigh the meetin’-house that time, and I don’t cal’late to this time, nor to have ary one of my folks, neither.”

“You’re always and forever ter’ble down on them preachers, Uncle Obed,” protested Captain

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Sheave. "I've took notice it's seldom ever we do have a one to this Harbor without you're always the fust to commence to pick on him, like. Maybe the time will come when you'll wisht you'd tended out on meetin' stricter 'n what you do, now'days."

"Like enough! Like enough!" laughed Master Fairway good naturedly. "But there, Cap'n, when you come to talk about my being down on them style of folks, why you're clean away off. It's a fact I got no great use for the stripe of preachers that mostly shows up to this Harbor at this day o' the world; same time I only wisht to God some one of 'em was able to heave us a line and give us a good pull, for we're gettin' into plaguey shoal water now'days, and no mistake! But *me* down on preachers! Why, 't ain't only this spring I was mistakened for a one myself, there to Portland!"

"Yas, it's some likely you was!" sneered Captain Sheave.

"Honest Injun, I was so, and no joke," Obed declared. "'T was the time of them big preachers' meetin's they was having, and preachers was as thick in the street as Jew pedlers in Tophit. Up steps this white-haired old sir and ketches me by the hand, real tickled to see me, same's ef him and me was proper old shipmates.

"Well, Elder, dear,'s I, quick's ever I could

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make out to slide a word in edgeways. 'You got the advantage of me in good shape this time, now I'll be jiggered ef you hain't, and no mistake!'

"'What!' 's he right off, 'ain't I addressin' the Rev. Dr. Slocum?'

"'Not by a damn sight you hain't!' 's I right out, without thinkin' like, and I wisht to gracious you could seen the look he give me that secont!"

"Did n't stop to make no more talk along o' *you*, prob'ly," remarked Abner Grommet from his bench.

"Talk? No, you bate he never!" Master Fairway said. "Shoved his hellum hard up, and kept her off for all he was wuth, now I tell you! I s'pose likely I had n't ought to spoke jest the way I done, but there! Prob'ly 't will be all the same a hundred year from now!"

"It's some lucky for you 't wa'n't old Elder Roundturn you bucked up against that way," said Abner Grommet. "I often set here and think what works there 'd be here to Kentle's Harbor ef ever he should take a notion to come to life and show up here again at this day o' the world. I cal'late he 'd make shift someways to fill the meet-in'-house chock-a-block full same 's he used to, don't you?"

"Fill her full!" repeated Obed Fairway. "He 'd

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have her jam-full clean to the hatches every lick, ef he had to collar every soul of us here to do it! I'll never forgit the time I see him take holt of old Skipper Adam Kentle up the road here a piece one Sunday morning. I wa'n't only about the bigness of a trawl-kag myself, but I can see the old sir yet, same 's ef 't was yesterday.

"Skipper Adam he sot out to take a walk down to his shore that morning so 's to turn a few fish he was makin' there on his flakes, but seems 's though elder he spoke him and ordered him to heave to right away. Big through as ary hogshead-tub you know old elder was, and strong as a steer. The two had some little argufyin' of it over betwixt 'em at fust, but all at once I heard elder holler out fit to stund ye, 'You won't trouble no fish not this morning, my friend,' 's he, and bedide ef he didn't up and grab old skipper by the scroff o' the neck, and snake him off in tow, goin' a ten-knot stick¹ at the least cal'lation. Why don't you turn to and gaft onto one o' them kind o' preachers to fill her up now'days, Cap'n Sheave?"

But Captain Sheave of late deemed it expedient to frown upon such jocularities concerning a former light of the Harbor church.

"All the same," said he somewhat severely,

¹ Rate.

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“you come to take Elder Roundturn there, and them that could down him a-preachin’ was some scattering. I ’m knowin’ to it myself that when he once got everything drawin’ in good shape, you could hear him tol’ble plain chock down to the shore of Back Cove, and that’s a good mile and a half, leave it to any livin’ man ef ’t ain’t!”

“Oh, he was a master old sir to poke it to ’em them days, ’cordin’ to all tell,” said Abner Grommet. “I’ll bate too you never ketched *him* usin’ no papers and writin’s to preach out of neither, same’s lots has to now’days.”

“I know well they do!” Captain Sheave cried indignantly; “I know well they do; any grists on ’em doos; but set-fire! no sich kind of krawm¹ and rubbidge will ever make out to git footin’ to this Harbor as long as I’ve got any say about it! The way I look at them things, ef a man’s got a call to preach, he don’t need no set of writin’s to help him out. Ef he’s got real old preaching into him, it’ll rabble out of his mouth good and easy, or else he full better take and git right into some other business quick’s ever he can git ’round to it. Ain’t that good hoss-sense, Abner?”

“Wall, yes,” admitted Captain Grommet, “I s’pose likely you’ve got the rights of it there,

¹ Rubbish.

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Cap'n. A consid'ble everyday sort of a preacher can make a pretty fair fist of it reading a mess of writin's off'n a parcel o' papers, but the way 'tis with me, ef I set out to go to meetin' at all, which I ain't much on doin' anyways, but allowin' I do take a notion, I want to see some feller into the pulpit that's going to stand right up in his boots and reel it plumb off'n his tongue like."

"That's the talk!" cried Jasper Sheave. "That's me too! That 'ere's what you may call proper good preachin', you! But same time I want a man should give us it so 's it can be heard good and easy, too. This 'ere jest merely mumblin' of it over the same 's the heft of 'em doos now'days is a style of preachin' that don't hit me for a cent, and I don't care who knows it, neither!"

At this point Abner Grommet took occasion to speak in commendation of a certain Indian evangelist, so-called, who had electrified his hearers during an all too brief sojourn at the Harbor.

"Set-fire, you!" at once exclaimed Captain Sheave in a burst of enthusiasm at the recollection of such eloquence. "What a voice that man had onto him! Put me in mind of the fog-horn out here on the Head, the fust time ever he preached, now that's a fact. I'll guarantee there wa'n't nobody in them ordinances deaf enough so 's they could n't

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hear *him* holler! And d'ye mind them great long jaw-twisters of words he kept ropin' in jest one steady string, — why, you! there wa'n't ary soul ever come to them meetings that knowed what under the livin' canopy he was trying to come at, not half the time! Ef he only would stopped here a spell, I cal'late the meetin'-house would been shingled before spring, and money to spare! Them smart kind won't never stop long to such places as this, though," the Captain added regretfully.

"Why had n't you went to work and coaxed him to stop over a spell, ef it took a leg?" asked Master Fairway. "Ef he suited you folks so right chock up to the handle, seem's though you might rigged it someways to had him hung on a spell longer."

"Did n't I try my dingdest a-coaxin' of him, as you call it," retorted Captain Sheave. "Coaxin' don't amount to shucks with them kind of smart ones, though; it's the dollars that talks, every blame' time. That Injun feller allowed how he'd stop along of us jest as long as I'd guarantee him his little ten dollars a week and board, and he would n't talk a red cent less money.

"I up and told him right off, 'Set-fire, you!' 's I, 'what you cal'late us folks 'round here is, any-ways? Jest only a reg'lar click of millionees, or what?' 's I.

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“ Wall, he never seemed to give a rap one way or t’ other ; independent as a hog on ice, he was ; ’lowed how he could easy make that much wages ’most anywheres ; so bein’ as we could n’t seem to hitch hosses in no kind of shape, he up and give it to her back down east again, where he come from. Now it’s all ter’ble fine to go ’round here a-yippin’ and yappin’ how we ’d ought to keep a reg’lar-built smart A No. 1 preacher to this Harbor, but I always take pertikler good notice that soon’s ever it comes to drawrin’ wallets and puttin’ out the cash, you fellers’ tails is all down ’twixt your legs in a jif !

“ Of course we can’t never count on no great shakes of a preacher stoppin’ here long to a time, for them kind most generally strikes a soft snap to some city-place, — they’re all after a dollar, same’s you and I be, exactly, — them that turns to and preaches for the love of the thing at this day o’ the world is few and fur between, now I tell ye what ! But we could run a meetin’-house here to this Harbor, and keep a fair up-and-comin’ style of preacher into her too, ef only our folks did n’t begrutch puttin’ out a cent for preachin’ now’days, so like the very mischeef. I cal’late myself we’re missin’ of it right along scand’lous by not keeping no reg’lar preacher. For one thing, we don’t commence to git holt of the rusticators here to this Harbor

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summer-times we would ef only we kept a preacher anyways steady. Rusticators wants preachers ; now you can take and paste that right into your hat ! Ever sence them summer folks fust struck in coming this way at all, I 've kind of kept the run of their talk on this and that when they 'd be tradin' to the store or the likes o' that, and I can tell you for a fact in the long run we 'd be full better off to keep a one. But there, though, as I tell them rusticators up there to my place, I can't always and forever bear the brunt of the bills, that 's a dead sure thing. I'm a pore man, and going astern every plaguey hitch I make, too, but still I cal'late to put in my time for nothin', and maybe give what little money I 'm able, 'cordin' to."

This familiar talk of poverty on the part of forehanded Captain Sheave was always taken by his hearers for just what it was worth. Every man Jack of them knew that his condition was most flourishing, and many of them had before this unwillingly contributed towards making it so.

" Well, then, I s'pose that settles it for us folks," observed Master Fairway. " Ef your boarders says preacher, nothin' else won't do without we turn to and git us one again right away off. How about this old Mister Step-and-fetch-it you 've got in dry-dock up to the parsonage now, Cap'n ? Ain't he

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never liable to limber up so 's to be any good again, think?"

"Set-fire! I dunno just what to think about *him*," answered Captain Jasper. "Some days I have consid'ble hopes he'll pan out fair to middlin' yit, but the thing of it is, he's so ter'ble short of clothes to wear, ye see. He ain't got ary half-decent coat to his name, nor nothin' else neither; fur's ever I can make out!"

"You don't mean to tell!" exclaimed Obed Fairway. "I want to know! That's ruther tough on the old sir, and no mistake. I see the day he come there wa'n't nothin' very beautysome about the looks of the pore old creatur'. Come right down to the fine point, I says to myself, he doos make out to be one of the very lookin'est old has-beens ever was stranded here yit, but then thinks I, maybe he may turn out same's the singed cat, as the feller said, — a sight smarter than what he looks to be!"

"You've always got to take and heave jes' so many slurs at every preacher we git us, now ain't ye though?" protested Captain Sheave. "Any pore fool can see of course he's pretty much run-out, and ain't no great to look at, fur's that goes, but his lungs appears to be some good yit, and the way I figger it, ef only we should take and sort of rag him out with some few togs amongst us, and

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maybe top-out that back kitchen chimbly to the pars'nage a little dite, he'll be more than apt to stop the winter out, and 't won't be no great bill of expense neither. He looks to me jes' though he would n't need no dredful sight of urgin' to stop and preach most anywheres for his keep!"

But it proved that shrewd Captain Sheave was too hasty in thus flattering himself that the Kentle's Harbor meeting-house was soon to have a settled pastor "preaching into her" on such gratifying terms. Chiefly through the exertions of Clara Fairway and her aunt, the wardrobe of the feeble old minister was in a measure replenished. Later he was able to preach on two Sundays, and also to earn a few much needed dollars by banking up certain houses for winter with rockweed and kelp from the shore. But his health was so uncertain, and his worldly possessions so exceedingly scanty, that retention was thought inexpedient, and he too departed.

Said Master Fairway, in summing up the matter afterwards: "Cap'n Sheave he made out to pick up a pore old wrack of a preacher adrift outside here somewheres, and towed it into this Harbor, cal'lating for sure he'd grafted onto consid'ble of a big prize, and no mistake. Come to call a survey, though, and he had to shift his mind quite a little.

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They found the gear pretty much all run-out ; keel twisted out of all manner of reason, wood-ends started forrard and aft, and upper-works consid'ble punky like. They finally come to the conclusion the wrack wa'n't noways wuth repairin'-up, so they jest turned to and condemned the old creatur', and sot her adrift again, tickled to be red of her afore ever she sunk on their hands."

By Christmas, therefore, the parish at Kentle's Harbor was once more pastorless, and the gray little meeting-house again stood deserted among the ledges on the hill. The howling northeast storms started bricks from its crooked chimney, and scattered shingles from the roof broadcast among the mossy headstones of its zealous supporters long years ago.

Very often the two narrow front windows were seen from the village gleaming brightly with the cold light of the wintry sunset across the bay, but the snow again lay heaped in unbroken drifts high against the weather-beaten door.

IV

“TOUCHING UP” THE TRAWLS

SOON after Christmas, at the close of a threatening afternoon spent as far as possible with Clara Fairway, Skipper Asa Kentle returned on board his little vessel to prepare for an unusually early start in the morning. The sun had sunk into a leaden bank of cloud behind the boulder-strewn uplands of Fairway's Point, on the high ridge of which the spruces slanted in a cutting wind from the sea. To the left, where the Point tapered down outside the harbor's mouth in long kelp-covered ledges, the surf was already beginning to leap and gleam with chalky whiteness against the stormy sky.

Among several other small fishermen, mostly strange craft, however, the Good Intent lay at anchor, slowly rolling on the long ground-swell which in spite of sheltering points and outlying reefs now heaved sullenly into Kentle's Harbor. Speeding across it from the eastward with growing strength and frequency, came heavy gusts that fretted and darkened the gray waters beneath, and caused each little craft in turn to set back upon her

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parceled cable till it strained in the hawse-pipe and squeaked like a living thing.

The men of the Good Intent had been busily at work most of the day in baiting trawls upon the vessel's deck, and after their usual four o'clock supper were now turned in forward for a few hours' rest before the expected early start soon after midnight.

Master Fairway seemed to find much difficulty in holding his great dory up to the furious flaws of wind which swept down upon him while making passage from shore to the vessel's side, and after stiffly climbing over her low rail, sat upon the after cabin-trunk for a moment nearly winded.

"Hullo, aboard the brig, you! How doos she head to-night?" he called directly, using a common form of jocose greeting.

"Great Scott, is that you, Uncle Obed!" exclaimed Skipper Asa, as he thrust his head up through the after companion-way. "You'll be getting blowed off yet, goin' to sea such chances as this! Come right down below where it's warm."

"It doos blow right out endways, and no mistake about it!" gasped Master Fairway, following Asa into the cabin. "I never realized there was any great sight of air a-goin' to-night, till, come to strike from under the lee o' the w'arft there, I soon

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see there was more heft to the wind than ever I cal'lated for. By spells she squeals like all possessed, don't she, though? Without this wind should backen in to the nor'ard too fur, we'll have it thick-a-snow on the next ebb tide. You don't figger on ary day to-morrow, I s'pose likely?"

" Well, you," the skipper said with a slight shrug, " It don't look any too much like a fish-day to-morrow, now that's true as preaching. There's been this heavy lee-set¹ herming up² in over the land since noon-time, and I guess no doubt but what it breezens on all the time steady, but we cal'lated to be out of this in the morning consid'ble earlier than common; that is of course without it blows so like a man we won't be liable to come to the turf again from out on the ' Broken Ground.' "

" Now look a' here, dear," said Master Fairway earnestly. " You don't want to go gittin' anyways too headstrong over this matter of fishing hard. Fishing hard is a grand good fault, but you always want to rec'lect that there's reason into everything, Asy, boy. You're doin' complete as it is, and you don't want to forgit that no matter how ' fishy ' ever a man may be, he ain't going to stand everything, no more 'n a horn spoon. I came out aboard of ye to-night a-purpose to see what about them gurry-

¹ Clouds to leeward.

² Thickening up.

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pens¹ you was telling was stove up so bad here a spell ago. Thinks I, there won't be no day to-morrow, that 's dead sure, and allowin' this wind don't keep pricking on harder all night, so 's to give us a reg'lar old 'brush'² to-morrow, I thought maybe I 'd come out aboard and try to titrivate 'em up a little grain for ye, like."

"Well, Uncle Obed, I 'm real sorry ever you put yourself out so much as all this," said Asa Kentle, "but I 'll tell you how we 're fixed. I know our gurry-pens are stove all to flinders, and I want you should repair 'em up for us the very first chance when we can stop in a day, but I don't dasst to lay in harbor here over to-morrow, now that 's the honest truth!"

"You don't dasst to, you say?" Master Fairway repeated. "What 's to hender your layin' in here ef you take a notion? You 're skipper, ain't ye? 'Cordin' to the way this wind is takin' holt and breezenin' on to-night, most folks would sooner say they dassent go out on their gear, in room of claimin' they dassent stop in harbor. Take it a little grain easier, boy. The whole of you Kentleses always was jest a dite too quick and headstrong, like. You hain't need ever be the leastways scairt of gitting 'nash'³ from settin' 'round the stove to

¹ Pens for holding fish.

² A heavy blow.

³ Soft, tender.

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home! I never knowed a Kentle yit with that failin’,” added Uncle Obed, giving the young man a fond tap on the shoulder.

“No,” said Asa with a laugh, “it’ll be plenty time enough to get ‘nash’ ’round the fire when Clarry and I have settled down somewheres together. What drives us outside this fall in all weathers is the ‘touchin’ up’ that’s going on of late, mostly by them Thrumbcap Island folks, though there’s plenty more been drawed into it now besides them. We’ve got a dozen or more tubs of trawls set out there on the Broken Ground now, and had-dick is worth money these days, you know. I see by my paper where they was paying four and five dollars over to the Cape for ‘steakers’ at last accounts, and krawm same’s we generally heave away for lopster-bait was fetchin’ two dollars right along. Anyways, you’d think fish was some dear jest now, to see how fierce them Thrumbcappers are now’days to ‘touch up’ every trawl they can run afoul of within reach of the Island!”

“Sho!” said Master Fairway. “That’s bad business. I rec’lect you was tellin’ some little time sence how they’d commenced them kind of works again, but I was in hopes they’d quit it by this time. It’s awful, and I don’t know what we’re comin’ to at this day o’ the world. Seem’s though

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things grows wuss and wuss. Same time, dear, from the look of it to-night, I guess likely nobody won't be apt to trouble trawls there to-morrow mornin'!"

"Won't they, though!" exclaimed Asa Kentle. "I'm only afraid it may be one of the very chances they're lookin' for, and they'll be liable to have it all their own way without we're on the spot. Soon's ever it shuts in thick-a-fog, or thick-a-snow, why so much the better for 'em. There's been good fishing on the Broken Ground now for a week's time, and that's why the most of us boats have shifted our gear in so fur, but you see it's a dead easy thing for them Thrumbcappers to slip out ahead of us, and under-run¹ our trawls in great shape. They've got all of three miles start of us boats that harbor in here by nights, and if we should n't be out there so's to under-run by the first glinn of daylight in the morning, I'll guarantee our trawls would be picked clean of every 'steaker' and market-fish on 'em by sunrise!"

"All the way in God's world you can do to save 'em is to be out there first, blow high or blow low, for there's a click down to the Islant now'days that makes nothin' of pulling a trawl² when it's as rough as a grater outside there, and blowin' half a

¹ To remove fish from trawls.

² To take in a trawl.

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gale o' wind. I've seen them two Spurlings out there on their gear this fall in that big green sprits'l shay of theirs when the whole Shoal Ground was nothin' only a clear streamin' torch of breakers!”

“What works! What works!” said Obed Fairway deprecatingly. “I call it a fool way to resk life, myself. Some of them big shays are dretful able boats though, and no mistake. You can't never drownd one of 'em, no more 'n a can-buoy.”

“Drownd one, no! They're right up atop of every sea same's so many hagdons,”¹ Asa said. “But that's just the way it is out there this winter, Uncle Obed. I know well it's been herming up thick and nasty all day overhead, and I guess likely we're in for a breeze o' wind fast enough; but if that's what's coming out of this, I want to get holt of my gear out there if it's anyways a possible thing, and fetch it in before ever it goes adrift on me. For that matter, though, we're liable to lose every tub of it without we show up out there about once in every so often. Seems 's though 't ain't enough for them damned thieves to ‘touch up’ folks' gear every chance they get, but take it of late and they've commenced to gaft onto the trawls and all the rest-part of the gear; kags, floats, anchors, and the whole business, clip and clean!”

¹ A species of gull.

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"I want to know ef they do so!" cried Obed. "Well, well, that ain't going to buy baby no frock very sudden, is it? I do wisht you could make out to git holt of the right ones, and have the law on 'em in good shape. Maybe six months in jail would make some on 'em take the hint to leave other folkses' gear be for a spell, anyways."

"Yes," said Asa, "I'm in hopes to catch 'em foul some fine morning, and if ever we do, then stand from under, now I tell you! I ain't anyways sure we'd bother much to have the law on 'em, neither; I guess we'd every one of us aboard sooner take it right out of their hides on the spot!"

"No, no, dear, that ain't no way to go to work," Master Fairway said. "I don't blame ye for wanting to give 'em a good round thumpin', but you've got to go kind of slow in them things. Be you certain sure, though, that it's jest only them Thrumb-cap Islant folks that's into sich works? There's rum-boats been in here this summer thicker'n ever I seen 'em in my life; and then again you know quick's ever it comes on the fall o' the year, there's boats that come acrost from the Cape and fishes out of here a sight; I see quite a few strangers in here to-night when I come aboard of you. Take it aboard some of them boats, and there's a ter'ble weeked class o' folks goes into 'em now'days. I

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don't doubt a mite but what some of 'em would rob a trawl jes' soon's not, ef ever they seen a good chance. Plague take their pelts, I cal'late they've stole a dozen barrels of apples off'n me this fall; but in room of settin' foot outdoors to have any kind of truck along of 'em, anyone had full better stop right to home and let 'em quilt, for talkin' to them kind is time hove clean away. I would sooner think it might be some of them out-o'-towners that trouble your trawls, Asy."

"Oh, well," said the skipper, "they ain't the worst ones just now, by a long chalk. Of course them dirty rum-boats are thick as blackberries, and make no end of trouble everywheres they go; and I know too that there's strange boats fishin' out of here off and on pretty much all the year round; nor nobody won't deny but what there's liable to be a consid'ble tough crowd aboard of 'em by spells. There's a big difference between the kind that go now'days, and them that went when you quit goin', Uncle Obed; but I know just who started in on this 'touchin' up' business this time around here, and who has been workin' it for just all it's worth, right along steady. There's something awful catching about the thing, you see. Seems's though it's like some kind of disease that takes holt of folks by spells. Maybe you won't

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hear a yip about such a thing for a long while, till all of a sudden she breaks out and spreads same 's the measles, and soon 's ever she once gets a good start, you 'll find folks 'touchin' up' that you 'd sworn would n't lay hand on a thing that w'an't theirn for love or money!"

"Wall," sighed Master Fairway "I don't know what's got holt of folks 'round here at this day o' the world. It's much as ever I dasst leave a pair of thole-pins into my dory now'days. 'T wa'n't that way, I know, forty year ago to this harbor, nor nothin' like!"

"Well, that's about the style of it now, sure's ever you live," the skipper said. "We've got a plenty right here to this harbor to-day that will steal the arm-holes out of a vest, quick's wink! One poor shoat of a thief can take and set a whole fleet of boats cuttin' each other's throats for all they're worth. Somebody starts in and 'touches up' my gear, we'll supposen. To-morrow by way of gettin' even, I turn to and pick his'n if I get the chance; or in room of that I just take and under-run the first trawl I come acrost. Maybe I don't know at all who it was picked my gear in the first place, but I cal'late to make myself whole someways, whether or no; and so the thing goes till the whole fleet of boats are robbin' one

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another same's so many pirates, and not just merely 'touchin' up' trawls right and left, but stealing and cutting gear like mad before they're through with it. Finally, things are bound to come to a head someways or 'nother, for you can't fish nor run any kind o' business no great length of time that way."

"Set-fire, no!" cried Obed Fairway. "Sich works is sure to cure theirselves after a spell, dear, but look out none o' your folks is drawed into 'em fust, Asy."

"Well, but there's got to be a halt called on this thing now pretty quick," Asa Kentle said. "Bob Glynn was sayin' only the other night that maybe a rappin' good dose of Cape med'cine would n't come fur out the way just about now."

"What's that?" asked Obed.

"No. 5 bird-shot plumb in the side is what he says they give a man over acrost there two falls ago, and there ain't been a word about any 'touchin' up' since," Asa said.

"Oh, well, there, you! Don't have no sich works as that aboard of ye!" Master Fairway said quickly. "You'll git holt o' the right man someways so's you can have the law on him!"

"All the way you'll get hold of them Islanders is to catch 'em in the act, and if ever we do, there's

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bound to be a mess of it right away. The boys aboard o' me are gettin' awful worked up, and not to blame neither. We 're every one of us fishin' as hard as we know how, and actually running gear fit for a craft twice our bigness.

“ Why jest only think, Uncle Obed, we 're carrying six dories this winter, and running five twelve-line tubs of trawl to a man ! That 's enough to take it out of a fellow in pretty good shape, leave alone having to stop outside night-times in all weathers to watch your gear, or else be robbed of your whole catch o' fish ! Four of 'em aboard of me this winter are married men with families to keep up, — I ain't got none yit-a-while myself, but I 'm in hopes to get me one in time, and I don't cal'late to let a man aboard fish any harder than what I do. There 's Bob Glynn, that I picked up over to the Cape this spring ; he 's single same's myself, but he 's got a girl over acrost there, and folks that he sends money to besides ; you come to talk about being crazy-wild over this 'touchin' up' business, and my eye ! but you ought to hear him take on ! Seems 's though he 'd go clean off his nut sometimes ! Poor fellow, he 's a good deal that way to-night in forrard there, though I guess this time it 's a master toothache as much as the 'touchin' up' that 's started him.

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“ But it’s awful aggravatin’, though, especially you come to take it one of these zero mornings same’s we had before this last thaw, when we’d have to work clean out as fur as the ‘ Outer Ridge,’ maybe, with the whole ocean all thick-a-vapor from the cold ; the half of us pounding ice half the time so’s to keep atop of water at all, and the wind in here nor’west blowin’ a regular screecher ; you let us work chock out to our gear on one of them kind of chances, jest tō find everything picked clean as a hound’s tooth, and there’s liable to be some pretty tall sayin’¹ over aboard this packet ! Them folks there to the Island have got the taste of blood amongst’em now in good shape, and seems’s though their cal’lation was this winter to ‘ touch up ’ everything in sight, — blame’ lucky if they don’t gaft² onto the gear and whole shootin’ match, clip and clean ! ”

“ Well, it’s a cryin’ shame, and no two ways about it,” Master Fairway said. “ Lord, how things doos change ’round ! There used to be nice, good, clever folks there to Thrumbcap Islant. I rec’lect well when there’d be two or three big boatloads of them Spurlings and Clulines come in here to the main and tend meetin’ at the Lower Cove reg’lar as clock-work. Them days every family of ’em

¹ Swearing, scolding, berating.

² Seize.

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would have all the way from nine to ten young ones apiece, and the schoolhouse there to Thrumbcap had forty-odd scholars tendin' of her one winter, I rec'lect hearin' tell."

"They ain't troublin' schools nor meetin' neither no great now'days," said Asa.

"No they ain't, that's a fact," Uncle Obed admitted. "Still, there's real clever appearin' ones amongst them Spurlings at this day o' the world. You come to take young Abram Spurling there" —

"The biggest damned thief of the whole kit!" broke in Skipper Asa. "I'm laying right for him and his brother in particular! Only once let me catch them two foul, so 's there won't be no mistake, and I'll undertake to put the pair of 'em where they'll bother no man's gear for one good long spell!"

"Yes, yes, I don't blame ye a mite, Asy," said Master Fairway. "Have the law on 'em quick's ever you git the chance. A reg'lar built thief is wuss'n the seven year's itch, and there's nothin' will take it out of him only the cold sod. Still, though, it doos beat all that them two Spurlings can be the bad eggs that you tell. Why, you had n't more than went away mackerelin' this spring afore Abram Spurling he come to the shop one day, and wanted I should repair him up that big green

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shay of his'n, — the same old shay I built for his old sir a dozen or fifteen years sence. Seems 's ef he'd plunked her somewheres pretty hard, and split a garboard quite bad, so she'd got to have a new one to start with, but he wanted I should take and give her a good overhaulin' all around while I was at it. He 'peared to set a master store by the boat someways, and allowed he didn't stand for expense a mite. I was to work on her nigh onto a month's time, and he used to be there along of me 'most every day, a-putterin' round and helpin' me out consid'ble with this and that; why, the woman and me, and Clarry too for that matter, we called him a rather extry good appearin' young feller. One spell there I did n't know but what Clarry was going to heave you over, and take up along of him in room of ye, altogether!

“Come to look 'round the shop, I could n't scare up a namable thing in the shape of stock to git that garboard strake out of, without it was a big overgrewed stick o' cypress that old Cap'n Isril Trunnel's woman give to me much as thirty years ago. That was all the thing in the shop that was long enough, unless'n I used some old refuge¹ cedar boards that wa'n't hardly fittin'.

“Cap'n Trunnel fetched this big chunk of cypress

¹ Refuse.

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wood home from Floridy one time in the old brig Halcyon, cal'latin' to have a hoss-trough out of it for his new barn, but he never got 'round to it someways, and after he got through, his woman up and give it to me. I shoved it un'neath the bench, and there it has laid ever sence. When this 'ere young Spurling fetched his boat 'round last spring, I told him I had n't got ary piece of wood to my name fit for a garboard, and would have to send off for some stock. Bimeby he got his eye on this big stick o' timber, and wanted to know what sort o' wood I called her.

“ ‘That,’ ’s I, ‘is cypress wood, and if you had a garboard strake out o’ that, now, as fur as rottin’ goes, you ’d never need no more garboards ef you lived to be two hunnerd.’ ”

“ ‘By jinks, you!’ ’s he right off. ‘Then I guess that ’s jest what the doctor ordered! only,’ ’s he, ‘I want me a pair on ’em. Take and tear out the other one, and put me in a pair o’ garboards I can swear by!’ ”

“ ‘Good land, dear!’ ’s I to him, ‘time you ’ve been and carted that master great log to the mill, and had her stripped up, and fetched her back home again, I guess likely you ’ll find you ’ve got costly old garboards into your shay, and no two ways about it!’ ”

“TOUCHING UP” THE TRAWLS

“He never squealed a mite, though. Seems’s though the best wa’n’t none too good for that shay of his’n. Come to git her all fixed up tanto for him again, he settled up his bill right man-fashion on the spot, and then he says to me like this: ‘I’ll bate high,’ ’s he, ‘this shay of ourn is all the boat in this deestricht has got a set of cypress garboards into her!’”

“‘Yes, sir,’ ’s I, ‘or you might full better say, that’s got ary piece of cypress wood into her from stem to starn-post!’”

“He’s safe to claim that, fast enough!” said Skipper Asa rather bitterly. “Them folks’ money comes easy to ’em and goes jes’ so easy, but if I should take and heave away mine so-fashion, I guess there’d be snow in the wood-box pretty quick!”

“Oh, well, Asy dear, don’t go gittin’ anyways het up over them Thrumbcappers,” said Obed. “You’ll be able to fetch ’em up with a round turn, and give ’em the full heft o’ the law yit, but same time I’ll lay a bate along of ye that them two Spurlings ain’t the ones you’re lookin’ for the most. Now I must be strikin’ out for shore again, for it’s a-near night-time already. Set-fire! Take it this time o’ year, and it gits dark un’neath the table afore ever a man can turn around twice after dinner. As the

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old feller says, 'the days are gittin' short and the nights a mere nothin'!' "

As they came again on deck and Asa brought the old man's dory alongside, every fast-rushing wave scintillated with phosphorescence like molten metal.

"Look how the water fires¹ to-night, will ye?" said Obed. "That talks easterly pretty plain. You best leave well enough alone, and stay where you be to-morrow."

Then disdaining all offers of assistance in returning, Master Fairway left the schooner, though Asa stood on deck until long after he disappeared in the darkness.

¹ To sparkle with phosphorescence.

V

THE SNOW-SQUALL

ROUSED by the fierce slatting of the Good Intent's canvas in the wintry blast as she made sail before even the first gray glimmers of daylight next morning, several skippers of neighboring craft craned their heads from the cuddies for a brief survey of the weather.

Quickly coming to the conclusion that there was to be "no day," one and all soon resumed their slumbers, and with a great bone in her teeth, under close reefs the Good Intent alone sped out of the harbor between the swinging lanterns of the fleet.

Although not yet a heavy storm, the wind continued fresh from the northeast, with the accompanying boisterous sea outside, rendering the attempt at locating trawls difficult, and when but a short time out, a blurring drive of sleet set in, with now and then short flurries of snow.

Owing to this thick weather, a good deal of time was occupied in getting hold of the windward trawl-buoy, but having at length made it unmistakably,

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dories were hurriedly put over the side for the arduous and dangerous work in view.

The toothache of which Robert Glynn complained on the afternoon before had increased tenfold. Rather than let him risk the inevitable exposure of pulling trawls under the circumstances, Asa Kentle considerably decided to take his place, and leave Glynn on board alone to handle the little vessel, jogging her off and on in the immediate vicinity, keeping the dories in sight as far as possible, and standing by to pick them up in turn when ready.

In moderate weather this was no difficult task, but it was already thick and fast growing more so, while soon after hauling his craft on the wind, Glynn found its force fast growing too much for comfort, to say the least. To make matters worse, hardly had the last dory got well at work, when with a few warning flakes an unusually furious snow-squall burst upon him, completely blotting from sight everything distant more than a few lengths of the little vessel. With this blinding rush of snow the wind also suddenly increased, till even under her short sail the Good Intent went down with her lee-rail under to the sheer-poles, and losing his foothold on the steep, slippery deck, the helmsman fell heavily across the wheel, striking his swollen

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jaw upon the brass-tipped spokes a blow which for the moment nearly paralyzed him with pain.

But Robert Glynn, as Skipper Asa well knew, was not in the least given to losing his head in an emergency. He scrambled to his feet, and skillfully luffed his vessel sufficiently to ease her somewhat, yet not enough to lose headway, or endanger loss of sails through slatting in the wild tempest which shrieked in the rigging and for some moments held the Good Intent nearly on her beam-ends with overpowering force.

Half crazed by the anguish in his face, and at times almost blinded by the pelting snow, Robert Glynn stood offshore hoping for at least a temporary lull in which to essay tacking ship and attempt the succor of the men, who he knew would be powerless to hold their own against so savage an onslaught.

Suddenly a faint cry rose above the raging of wind and sea, and directly in his course ahead he saw the Spurling brothers frantically gesticulating in their shay, which was made fast to one of the gayly painted kegs distinguishing the fishing gear of the schooner Good Intent.

Quick as a flash there arose in Robert Glynn's breast an ungovernable paroxysm of fierce rage and revenge. All the wrongs he and his companions

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had suffered at the hands of the two men ahead arose instantly before him ; the financial losses, the needless labor and exposure, even the present maddening throbs of pain in his jaw, he owed to the two men wildly shouting and waving their arms, now almost under his vessel's bow.

A second flaw of great violence swept down upon the vessel, under which she would have luffed and cleared the boat ahead of her own accord. With a desperate exertion of all his strength, Robert Glynn hove the wheel hard up, and kept the schooner on her course till, heeled down upon her broadside almost to the hatch-combings by the full force of the blast, and rolling a foaming breaker under her stumpy bowsprit as high as the knight-heads, the Good Intent struck the Spurling brothers' green shay fairly amidships.

There was a smothered crash, hoarse oaths and shrieks, and a jar which seemed to rack the schooner to her keelson. Pieces of whirling green painted wood, oars, and kid-boards came up under her run and rolled over and over in the seething wake astern, though the close-muffled helmsman gave no backward look.

At the first possible opportunity he tacked the vessel, and standing in for some minutes, by great good luck came upon Skipper Asa. Soon after, the

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snow nearly ceased for a time, but a downright northeaster had evidently been ushered in by the first heavy squall, and Asa Kentle reluctantly was obliged to abandon pulling or even under-running the trawls.

By this time the full horror of Robert Glynn's recent deed was upon him. He saw constantly before his eyes the two gesticulating figures in yellow oilskins; he heard always their first faint shouts of warning, fast growing louder and more frenzied, then changing to fierce imprecations; he heard again the sickening crunch of splintering wood; the vessel jarred once more under his feet, and again the last horrible gurgling cries of the Spurling brothers rang upon his ears.

Some vague idea of claiming the dreadful affair to be an accident had already crossed his mind, but as the now passing snow-squall lifted like a dense curtain from the foam-streaked sea, Robert Glynn suddenly realized that had the recent tragedy occurred in mid-ocean it could not have been more completely unwitnessed. It would be time enough to plead an accident when he was accused of the deed; meanwhile it was too horrible to talk about, and he resolved for the present at least to await developments, and say nothing.

After regaining his vessel, Asa at once took the

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helm and began the difficult task of picking up the now scattered dories. Robert Glynn, sick and clamorous for the solace of the hot forecastle stove, dove below at the earliest moment when his services could be dispensed with.

Wind and sea increased together. Tied down to third reefs, the Good Intent bucked madly into it on her homeward trip, now throwing her forefoot clear on a foaming comber, and now burying herself to the foremast in wild plunges that sent the salt spray driving like gravel high against the straining sails.

It was after a succession of such violent tumbles into the head-beat sea that Robert Glynn suddenly drew back the forward companion-way slide long enough to announce in language at once forceful and picturesque, the fact that water was appearing over the forecastle floor, and also that at times he could see it squirting into the forepeak near the stem.

Upon this the pump was at once manned, while such cursory examination as was possible forward showed that the figurehead was missing ; it having apparently been torn away from its bolting to the stem by the vicious seas which continually struck the little vessel staggering blows in the face, and deluged her fore and aft.

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The stem itself was badly damaged, so that in the ensuing long thrash to windward the leak developed till constant pumping scarcely kept it under control. In smoother water, under the lee of the land, it subsided somewhat, and after reaching the sheltered anchorage of Kentle's Harbor only occasional spells at the pump were necessary.

Throughout the day and night it stormed steadily, and though word of the schooner's crippled condition had been sent Master Fairway, nothing could be done in the way of repairs until the gale subsided on the next day. The other boats then went out, anxious to learn the condition of what little gear had been exposed to the storm, but Asa Kentle was obliged to warp his vessel in alongside a wharf, where the falling tide would leave her stem exposed for thorough inspection. Then, reflecting that they would probably be detained in harbor for some days, he unbent the jib, and, putting it in a roll upon his shoulder, took it down the street to Abner Grommet's sail-loft for some needed repairs.

Master Fairway's favorite dory being then snowed under, he arrived alongside on foot during the skipper's absence, and, taking one belonging to the vessel, went forward with a member of the

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crew to examine the leak, which had already easily been located. The main trouble was somewhat above the water line, and here several wood-ends were badly opened, so that Master Fairway readily pushed in the blade of his jackknife nearly its whole length.

“What in the name of the great horn spoon have you fellers been tryin’ to butt with this old packet of yourn?” he asked at once. “It beats tar-water how jest carryin’ away that little no-account billet-head ever should knock your stem-piece all galley-west this way! Sure you never struck ary piece o’ drift stuff;—some old water-soaken log o’ wood, or tree-trunk, or nothin’? It don’t take anything of much bigness, you know, to give a vessel a master-clip when she’s goin’ a good stick, same ’s you was, especially ef you happen to hit it anyways nigh end on.”

“Oh, yes, I un’stand all that fast enough,” said the man; “but we never tetched of so much as a cork-stopple adrift, and every soul aboard will tell you the same.”

Several of the schooner’s crew, who were leaning over the bow closely watching proceedings, here corroborated the statement that no object, however small, had, to their knowledge been struck by the vessel.

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“We done that job in them tide-rips down to loo’ard of the Islant,” said one, “and ef I ain’t mistakened, I rec’lect jest the very particular old he-one of a sea that hit us the clip. Don’t you know how ungodly chowy¹ and hubbly² it gits down there with the flood tide settin’ in ag’in an easterly breeze o’ wind? Good Lord! she like to have took us plum off’n our feet, some o’ them jumps she give!”

“Oh, well, you!” said Master Fairway, scratching his head vigorously, “I don’t cal’late to dispute or misdoubt your say-so, noways, for without a man was three sheets in the wind with rum, he’d be apt to know it when his vessel struck like that. Maybe there ain’t no sign of wings sproutin’ on ary one of you fellers yit-a-while, but you ain’t no kind of a drinkin’ crowd aboard here, anyways. All I got to say is, ef you’d set out to knock over the spindle on Gangway Laidge off here, seems’s though you would n’t spawled up your stem much wuss than what you have.

“By good rights this hooker had ought to have a brand-new stem-piece into her, but I s’pose likely I’ll be able to piecen out this one, and cobble it up someways so’s to make it stand ye the rest-part of the winter. Look a’ here, you!” he added, after a

¹ Rough.

² Rough.

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sudden start backward, "what's this stuff you're wearin' in your bob-stay? I like to have poked my eye out on that plaguey thing!"

With that, after one or two unsuccessful attempts, Master Fairway extricated from a link of the chain bob-stay a firmly wedged, ragged sliver of wood, one side of which was painted a bright green. He glanced at it carelessly, and twirled it into the bottom of the dory.

"You've made out to pick up that much drift stuff somewheres, anyway," he said. "Here's green paint on the stay, too. Ef a man was doin' his dingdest to ketch up a billet of wood jest that per-tikler way, I don't cal'late he could do it in ten thousand times tryin'. Now," he said, slapping the pockets of his blue overalls, "I wisht I had my rule by me, so's to git an idea how big a chunk of wood I've got to git out there to home for that stem. Plague take the thing, guess I never fetched it along. Maybe I can come somewheres a-near to the right bigness with this 'ere billet o' wood though," and picking up the fragment, he made certain measurements with it, marking them by cutting notches with his knife. "There you be!" said he complacently. "That sliver o' wood come in nice as a pin. Piece of some small boat's plank-in', that is, and most new too, I should jedge, for

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there ain't never been but one coat o' paint on it, and 't ain't water-soaken the least dite."

Master Fairway then laboriously climbed to the wharf above, and turning down the road towards home, caught a glimpse of Asa Kentle in the doorway of a store close by. In answer to his hail the young skipper at once crossed the street to him.

"I was in hopes you'd be 'round this mornin', Asy. You got a bad stem there, and no two ways about it!" Obed said.

"I did cal'late to be back an hour ago," said Asa Kentle, "but Abner wa'n't opened up when I got down to the loft, you see, and jest now Cap'n Ezry wanted I should look in and run over last month's account with him. I cut loose quick's ever I could. You'll be able to repair us up all right, won't you?"

"Well, maybe I can find me a stick of refuge stuff layin' 'round down home there, so's to piecen you up temporary like, but you'll want a new stem in the spring time, sure. This old one is gittin' pretty tender, and prob'ly that's the reason she went back on you same's she done. I been tryin', though, to make your crowd own up they run into something or 'nother outside there, but they all stick it out they never!"

"That's nach'al enough, too, seeing as they ain't

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never!" said Asa Kentle smiling. "I've been expecting that figure-head would leave us, and maybe make trouble most any day. There's been considerable play to the old thing ever since we bought the vessel."

"Oh, set-fire!" said Obed Fairway. "Your stem carried away the figger-head, in room of the head's carryin' away no stem! Well, you got to be repaired up, anyways, and I'll git at it quick's ever I can!"

Turning homewards again, Master Fairway presently came upon a small group of citizens talking earnestly together.

"Heard the news from the Islant?" asked one of them as he was passing.

"News? No, never a yip!" he said. "What is it?"

"Seems's though them two boys of old Abram Spurling's has passed in their checks!"

"Sho! You don't tell!" cried Obed Fairway. "How for king's sakes come that about?"

"Seems's though that's jest what they can't find out so fur," answered the man. "They're goners, though, fast enough. Seems's though the two of 'em was off to their trawls day before yesterday jest as the breeze come on, and ain't never showed up sence. That big shay o' theirn come ashore on the

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back side of the Islant, and stove all to kingdom come."

"No, that ain't the way I got it!" exclaimed another. "I heard say she was stove when she come ashore. I heard say that John Ed Clueline fell in along of her about noontime, and he says she was chock-a-block full of water, and damn nigh cut in two then. The ballis'-stones was every one spillt out of her, and John Ed he set out to git a line to her and tow her in, but it shet in thick-a-snow on him pretty quick ag'in, and you know after the wind backened in no'theast how like a man it blowed all the rest-part of the day. Of course John Ed could n't make no fist of it towin' that much drug¹ astern, and had to cut her adrift. The way it commenced to breezen on after dinner, I guess likely he was tickled enough to fetch the turf² again hisself, leave alone towin' in no wracks!"

"Well, well, that's too bad, and no two ways about it!" said Obed Fairway. "The shay was a-nigh cut in two, you say. Run down, like's not."

"That's how it looks on the face of it," the other assented. "'Twas thick-a-snow by spells all day you see, and maybe some vessel done it; might done it a-purpose for all you can tell. They say them two Spurlings has been touchin' up trawls

¹ Drag.

² To come to land.

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wuss 'n ever this fall, and maybe somebody had it in for 'em like, on account o' that. Anyways," said the man with a laugh, "they ain't no great of a loss, I guess!"

Master Fairway plodded on his way thoughtfully. Suddenly he stopped, put on his glasses, and began to examine carefully the green-painted fragment of wood he still held in his hand. He took out his knife, and peeling a long shaving off one edge, tasted it as critically as he would have the first fruit from one of his young apple-trees. Then he moved along again, but still more thoughtfully and slowly, and with eyes constantly fixed on the ground at his feet. At length he turned in at his own gate, and was passing to the workshop in the rear of the house, when Clara Fairway came to the kitchen door.

"How much is the Good Intent hurt, Uncle Obed?" she called.

Master Fairway stopped and looked up at the girl in a dazed sort of way.

Clara repeated her question.

"Oh," he then said, with almost a groan, "'tain't nothin' any great," and went into the shop.

But instead of going to work, Obed Fairway leaned heavily against his bench, and stared blankly

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at the green bit of wood, twirling it meanwhile between his fingers mechanically. Presently he straightened up suddenly, and putting the bit of wood in his overcoat pocket, proceeded with hurried steps to the wharf again. Asa Kentle was on deck when he reached the vessel.

"Well, Uncle Obed," he called, "what's the verdict? You can begin to fix us up to-day, can't you?"

"I want you should come right up here a minute, Asy," Master Fairway said. Asa at once swung himself to the wharf by the main-rigging.

"Asy," began Obed Fairway in a low, constrained voice. "I ain't no kind of hand to back and fill. You know them two Spurlings are drowned?"

"Why, sure thing I do," said the skipper; "I heard it not a minute after you left. I've just been over acrost to the fish firm wharf to see their shay, or leastways what there is left of her. John Ed Cluline has fetched her in to see if you can't repair her up again, but I guess she's past fixing this time, without they want to pay for a brand spang-in' new boat. She looks to me a good deal same's the boy's old jackknife, that he said would make a bully good kind of a knife, come to give her a new handle and a couple of blades."

"Anyone would n't hardly think ever you'd

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want to go and look at that 'ere shay," Master Fairway said gravely.

"Why should n't I want to look at her?" asked Asa in surprise.

"After you've been to work and drowned two folks dead, 'tain't anyways nach'al to want to go and hang 'round the boat they was drowned out of," Obed said firmly.

"Good gracious! What ails you, Uncle Obed, anyways?" cried Asa, "Are you jokin', or plumb crazy, or what?"

"'T ain't never my way to back and fill no great, as I say," Master Fairway continued. "Only two or three days' time sence, you was tellin' of me that them two Spurlingses was troubling your gear right along, and you was givin' out no end of threats in regards to the big come-uppance you and your crowd aboard there cal'lated to have ef ever you got the chance" —

"Yes, I was so!" cried Asa Kentle, "but my God, Uncle Obed" —

"Let me say my say out, and then you shall have yourn all you want!" the old man went on steadily. "Now you come in here with your vessel all disabled forrard, — with the stem nigh ripped out of her complete, and leakin' jest one steady stream accordin' to your own tell, so you say, or your crowd

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says you never once got a suck on your pump till you 'd smoothened down the water up in here under the land. You take and git me to come aboard of ye to see what about repairin' of ye up again, prob'ly for the very reason there ain't nobody else here you can git jest now, but I notice you take pertikler good care to skin off down the road on some make-belief errant or other, for you dassent look me in the face after what you done! But seems 's though you never covered up your tracks aboard here none too well, for about the fust thing ever I done this morning was to pull this 'ere piece of wood from out of your bob-stay. She's almost a brand new piece of a small boat's plankin', she's painted jest one single coat of verdigrease; she's cypress-wood, and she come out of them Spurlingses green shay, and nowheres else, for I ain't scairt to make my affidavit I put this very same billet of wood into that boat's garboard strakes not two months sence!"

"And I ain't scairt to take my oath it's no such a thing!" cried Asa Kentle, coloring up, and fast losing self-control. "I don't give a rap if you got holt of forty pieces of cypress boat-plank in my bob-stay, nor if the Spurlingses green shay was all the boat atop of water on God's whole footstool that was cypress-planked,—nor it don't jar me one mite what set-fired color under the sun they're

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painted ; I tell you fair and square, and my whole crowd aboard here will back me up in it too, that we never see hide nor hair of them Spurlings nor their shay neither that morning, and what's more, Obed Fairway, if only you was younger than what you are, I'd take this very minute and heave you neck and crop to hell overboard for up and accusin' me this way ! ”

“ There, there, you ! Don't say no more, don't say no more ! ” said Master Fairway, and the words almost choked in his throat. “ You've said a plenty a'ready. I was in great hopes that come to see you to your face, 't would maybe turn out at least you never run down and drowned them two boys a-purpose. I was some in hopes 't was thick-a-snow when you done it, so 's maybe you never seen their shay in time enough to keep off, or come to, ary one, but bein' as you 've all hands agreed amongst ye to lie out of it, and stick to it through thick and thin, why I 'm done with ye clip and clean ! This Harbor has got about as fur down as it can git, but I did cal'late you and the rest-part of ye aboard here was another make from the heft of 'em 'round here now'days ! I thought very different of ye from this, Asy Kentle, now that's God's truth, but seem's though you're all tarred with pretty much the same brush, after all ! Don't you never come

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a-near to my house again, Asy Kentle, for the blood of them two young Spurlings is on your head, and no mistake about it ! ”

Swallowing hard in the effort to conceal his emotion, Master Fairway then turned his back upon Skipper Asa Kentle, and with uncertain steps once more started homewards.

VI

PLAIN WORDS FROM MASTER FAIRWAY

ON hearing fully of the accusation so unwillingly brought against them by their old friend Master Fairway, the indignation of Asa Kentle's crew was but little less than his own, and the remarks made concerning the old man were of a sort well calculated to make his ears tingle.

Skipper Asa's first wish was to meet Clara Fairway, and though forbidden the house in so plain terms, it was no difficult matter to arrange an interview elsewhere. This Asa did at the earliest opportunity, and was instantly struck by the girl's perturbed, unhappy appearance.

"Clarry," he burst out at once, "do you believe a word of what your uncle says about me and all the rest-part of us aboard the vessel? Do you know he has told me never to come a-near his house again?"

"Uncle has told us all about it, Asy," said Clara, affectionately putting her hand on his shoulder. "You must n't mind too much what he says just now, though, for he is terribly worked up and

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is hardly himself. He has talked of nothing else for two days. I don't believe he slept a wink last night, and I'm very sure I did n't myself."

"What I want to know the most is, do you believe it?" Asa persisted. "Do you believe we drowned them two Spurlings, Clarry?"

"Asy Kentle," said Clara earnestly, "you know well I never would believe such a thing of you in this world! I'm sure enough you never intended to run into that boat, but you know how thick and stormy it grew that day; why, I was as nervous as a witch when I found you were the only ones that went out that morning! It blew awfully even in here, and such whirling, blinding snow-squalls it seemed as if I never knew before. There were times when I could n't see across the road even, and I was terribly anxious all day for fear you'd get into trouble."

"Then I suppose what you think likely now is that if we never run 'em down a-purpose, still we done it all the same, and are trying to lie out of it," said Asa.

"Oh, Asy, don't talk like that!" Clara cried. "I know perfectly well you would n't lie about that or anything else. I've told uncle a hundred times that if you knew you had done it you would own up to it, but, there, oh dear! my head is in such a whirl

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I don't know what to think! If you could only hear Uncle Obed set it out the way he has to aunt and me by the hours together, I believe you'd have to think yourself that the Good Intent struck that boat, somehow or other!"

"I don't think it's anyways likely he'd be able to talk me into believing we cut that shay chock in two, and still never once mistrusted we ever struck so much as a bunch of kelp afloat!" said Asa. "I tell you, Clarry, we never even sighted that boat nor no other boat. The Good Intent was all the boat that went out of here that morning, anyways" —

"Why yes, that's just what uncle keeps saying," interrupted Clara. "That's one thing that makes me think you must have run into them without knowing it, though uncle says such a thing could n't possibly be. Could n't you have struck that boat so that she sunk afterwards, Asy? Perhaps you never realized it when it was storming so hard, and you were all so busy and excited about taking care of your vessel, Asy!"

"No, we could n't done it noway in God's world," said Asa Kentle most decidedly. "Whoever struck that shay such a clip was well aware of it when they done it; there's no good arguing about that part of it. It's plain enough your uncle has talked

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you into believing I drowneded them two Spur-lings " —

"I don't think for a minute you ever meant to, Asy," sobbed Clara.

"Meant to or not, you 're taking his word for it in room of mine, Clarry Fairway, and as long's you feel that way about it, all the way ever I see for me to do is just to pull out of this whole business, and that's what I shall do " —

"Oh, no, Asy! No!" cried Clara Fairway, seizing both of Asa's hands in her own. "You never can mean to let this come between us like that, can you?"

"Seems 's though it had come between us already, in spite of me!" Asa said bitterly. "I never cared two pins for any other girl only you, Clarry, but same time I won't ask you nor no other living girl to keep company with me till this thing is cleared up! I wish you 'd tell Master Fairway that as fur as the Good Intent is concerned, I'm ready any day to buy or sell, and he won't have to speak but once, neither!"

With that, the hot-headed young skipper clasped Clara Fairway in his arms for an instant, and then unheeding all her attempts at detention, quickly took his leave.

For some days indignation overrode all other

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feelings in his bosom. Again and again with his crew and other friends he rehearsed the whole affair, and each time with growing resentment against Master Fairway.

But Asa had always prided himself on his ability to look at both sides of any question, and thinking the matter over in a calmer mood later, he was obliged to acknowledge that from Obed Fairway's point of view, circumstances were so overwhelmingly against him as to preclude any more favorable conclusion on the old man's part.

And Clara, though by no means lacking in character of her own, he knew was much given to accepting her uncle's opinions on matters in general, while on all nautical affairs Master Fairway's word was final, not only in his own household, but to a great extent throughout the Harbor. After accustoming himself, as he at length did, to looking at the affair through Obed Fairway's eyes, Asa sometimes felt a desire for another interview with him. Had he been able to evolve an explanation likely to be of any weight whatever with the opinionated and stubborn old man, such a meeting might have been sought, though even at such times the thought that Obed Fairway refused to take his word invariably brought back the old feeling of bitterness in full force.

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Meantime no further word came to him. Another man was found to patch up the schooner, and fishing was resumed. The community seemed about evenly divided as to whether the Spurling brothers had been intentionally run down and drowned or not. That their boat was sunk by the Good Intent was generally taken for granted. Of late years, however, several somewhat similar affairs had passed with only a temporary ripple of excitement in the village, though certainly with the tragic death of these two young men the practice of robbing fishing gear in the vicinity ceased abruptly. All winter trawls were unmolested on the Broken Ground and Shelly Bottom; the herring boats again encircled Thrumbcap Island with their nets, and lobster catchers from the Harbor once more left their white buoys bobbing just clear of its swaying kelps.

Captain Jasper Sheave had heretofore never been in the least notable for any zeal in the suppression of crime at Kentle's Harbor. On the contrary, his activity in smothering and hushing up talk after each of the many disgraceful scrapes in which his son had prominently figured was well remembered. In connection with the present case, however, Captain Sheave not only enlarged upon the enormity of the offense on all occasions, but

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vainly solicited subscriptions for the alleged purpose of employing a detective upon the case.

Always prefacing his remarks by calling attention to the fact that he "didn't call no names, and would n't want this should go no further," for some time Captain Sheave gave himself up to a cunning attempt at fastening the crime upon Asa Kentle.

In particular he waylaid Master Fairway at every opportunity, and at length calling upon him at home one afternoon, declared himself fully converted to the old man's well-known theory of degeneration in country places. He recalled numerous instances of serious crime at the Harbor in which no attempt whatever had been made towards punishing the offenders, and predicted the direst results in consequence.

At length, finding Master Fairway in an unwontedly receptive mood, he gradually disclosed the chief object of his visit.

"Uncle Obed," said he, "I feel ter'ble sorry for ye, now that 's a fact. Of course everybody knows jest how you've went to work and hove away money puttin' it into that little vessel. You don't want no part of her yourself to bother with at this day o' the world, but you done it a-purpose to help out a certing young squirt that 's turned out a

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dretful pore shoat, and no mistake. I s'pose likely your gal here kind o' coaxed you into it, like."

"No, she never!" said Master Fairway. "I took my sixteen thirty-seconts in that vessel afore ever there was a thing betwixt them two. She's been good payin' property, too, that vessel has; I'll say that much for her."

"Wal, wal, s'posin' she has, so fur," said Captain Sheave. "You wait a spell and see how you come out. I know you've been to consid'ble expense, and put yourself out no end to give quite a few of these young fellers a boost, and now here's this last one makin' his threats to your face how he'll take and heave ye off'n the w'arft! Mind, I don't call no names, and I wouldn't want this should go no further, but the rest-part of them folks to Thrumbcap Islant don't cal'late to let this thing drop right here, now don't you go thinkin' they do! I been down there and talked along of 'em myself, and I tell ye, Uncle Obed, there's liable to be an afterclap, this time! 'Twas a set-fired weeked thing to take and drownd them two boys that way, Obed; scand'lous weeked. There's two big families o' children left there this time to starve to death, without they come right on the town, and see the bill of expense we'll have to shoulder then!

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“My Lemmy he says them two Spurlings wa’n’t all the ones that robbed trawls, by no means. ‘Cordin’ to his tell, the heft o’ the boats now’days cal’late to ‘tech up’ a trawl quick’s ever they see a good chance. The thing of it is, them that is smart enough to git out on the grounds fust has the best pickin’, and I guess that’s about the size of it!”

“I know things has got into a ter’ble bad mess ’round here, ter’ble bad now’days,” said Master Fairway, “but nobody ain’t going to starve, nor come on the town, ary one! I took a row down to the Islant myself some time sence, and I know jest how they’re fixed. You need n’t fret yourself a dite about anybody’s starvin’, Cap’n.”

“Wall, I ’m pleased to hear you’ve looked after ’em, Obed,” said the Captain. “It doos come consid’ble hard on you, though, and no mistake about it. But there’s liable to be a big hue and cry raised ’round here over the drowndin’ of them two pore boys, and you ain’t noways to blame for wanting to shake clear of the one that drownded ’em. The way I look at it, Clarry is too likely a gal to go and heave herself away on no sich rubbidge. What I wisht the most, Obed, is jest like this. I wisht Clarry and my Lemmy there could make out to hit it off betwixt ’em someways. Seems’s though

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that would be jest complete. Lemmy he's been a little mite wild by spells, I think's likely, but he's smart as a whip, Lemmy is, ef he takes a notion. He ain't nobody's fool, and don't you think he is!"

"Why had n't you kept him into the store along of ye, Cap'n?" asked Obed Fairway, who was well aware of the common report that the young man had been caught in extensive pilferings from his father's establishment, and that this, with the drunkenness well-nigh universal at the Harbor, had occasioned his dismissal.

"Oh, wall, you," said Captain Sheave, visibly disconcerted at this direct question, "Lemmy he could n't seem to settle down to stoppin' into the store there jest yit. Kind of confin' like for him, ye see. He thought he'd lieveser go fishin' again a spell this winter, so's to be outdoors, and that's why I bought into that little vessel for him. Lemmy ain't drinkin' a drop this winter, and allows he's got all through with sich works for good and all. I ain't scairt to bate but what you let him git him a good nice up-and-comin' little woman, and he'd settle down stiddy as a clock. The way I look at it, Obed, ef your Clarry would jest up and take a holt of Lemmy in good shape, she'd be the makin' of him. I cal'late he'd be liable to turn out one of the smartest men ever was raised to this Harbor.

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What d'ye say, Uncle Obed? Could n't the two of 'em make out to pair off noways, think?"

"I ruther guess that'll be pretty much the way Clarry says," Master Fairway felt it safe to answer. "So fur as ever I know, she ain't more'n passed the time of day along of your boy sence they was to school. I'm in great hopes she'll be shet of Asy Kentle, but as for takin' up along of somebody else right off, that's another thing. Clarry ain't the kind to be drove, now I tell you what!"

"Wall, take and speak a good word for Lemmy off and on, won't ye, Obed?" said Captain Jasper. "He sets an awful store by Clarry, that boy doos, and always has so. I'm knowin' to it he thinks there ain't nobody jest like Clarry Fairway. Set-fire! It's always and forever Clarry this and Clarry that! What Clarry Fairway says and doos, Lemmy he's always ready to swear by for gospil truth. You kind o' think it over, Obed, and jest rec'lect that ef Clarry won't have nothin' to say to him, the pore feller is like to loose his grip altogether; he won't have no courage for nothin', scursely. Take and think it over, Uncle Obed, and see ef you can't give him a helpin' hand betwixt ye, here!"

"Cap'n Sheave," Master Fairway said, "'t ain't never my way to back and fill. I'm in hopes, as I say, that Clarry will heave over Asy Kentle, bein'

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as what has happened," — and here the old man swallowed hard, — "but same time I won't make you no promises. Ef your boy cal'lates now to quit his ructions, and stop cutting up demeaniors, and is takin' holt to git a good honest living, why I'm plaguey glad to hear it. He's been trainin' and traipsin' along of a ter'ble bad lot to this Harbor, prob'ly you know full better 'n what I do!"

"Yes, yes, boys has always got to be boys for a spell," the Captain said. "Lemmy he's turned over a new leaf now though, and no mistake. I cal'late he'd be apt to git religion in good shape now pretty quick, ef only we had anyways reg'lar meetin's. That puts me in mind of another thing I set out to speak of to ye, Obed. I wisht you'd turn to and help us out to keep a preacher to this Harbor again. The way I look at it, ef only we kept the meetin'-house a-runnin' anyways stiddy, this place never would run out same's it has at this day o' the world. Folks never'd be drowndin' other folks for nothin' ef we'd kep' a good smart preacher here right along. I've got track of a one now, Uncle Obed, from up back o' Boston there somewheres, that they tell me is smart as a whip. What's the reason I can't put down your name to help us out, same's you used to?"

"Cap'n Jasp," said Obed squarely, "seems's

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though by this time you'd ought to know pretty much how I stand on this 'ere. God knows we've run out enough here, to this Harbor, and if here ain't a mish'nary field along this coast, where on the face o' the footstool will ye find one? It's been all of fifty year now since the tide first commenced to 'pinch off,' and it's been ebb tide with us ever since. It's dreened out and dreened out on us, till seems's though now it must be low-water-slack, and no mistake! I've watched the beach pretty sharp now these last few years in hopes to see some signs o' flood tide again; by spells I kind of believe it *has* made again jest a dite on the shore, but every time I see I was mistakened; 't is nothin' only a tide-boar that runs in from outside once in every so often, and then sucks out again lower'n ever 't was, same 's it has jest now!"

"'Most always darkest jest afore day, they say," remarked Captain Sheave tritely.

"Wall, I hope that's the way of it, I'm sure," Obed said. "But what I'm coming at, Cap'n, is jest this. You claim we're run out here to this Harbor for lack of preachers; I tell you 't is the *kind* of preachers we've had here mostly that has killt religion deader'n forty herring!"

"Don't git het up! Don't go gittin' noways blasphemis," Captain Sheave urged.

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“Nothin’ blasphemis about it!” replied Obed. “Take it the last twenty-five years, and I’ll give in to ye we’ve had quite a few good clever preachers; the kind that wanted to help us out, and prob’ly would done so more or less, but they could n’t get their bread and butter, and had to quit. You know yourself, Cap’n Sheave, that quick’s ever ary preacher dast to stand up in his boots and preach ag’in the set-fired works he sees goin’ on here the heft o’ the time, jest that very minute his name’s mud;—he’s got to fill away and leave. Some has stuck it out here till they like to starved to death, but in the end they’ve been drove to quit. I see you ain’t noways desirous to hear no more, Cap’n, but you asked me a plain question, and I cal’late to answer plain’s I know how, while I’m at it. Come to take some o’ them that has made out to stop here any length o’ time. I won’t make no account of the young fry that’s drifted in here to spark the gals and go plummin’¹ summer-times,—some of ’em nice clever appearin’ little fellers too, that would n’t do no hurt ef they could n’t do no good; same’s the one that told me hisself he took up preachin’ because he was ter’ble troubled with fits, and could n’t do anything else for a living!

¹ Berryin’.

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“ We ’ve had a big run of them kind without no great benefits as ever I could see, and then we ’ve had any God’s quantity of poor old back-numbers all crippled-up or broke down with one thing or another till the bulk o’ their time was took up tryin’ to dodge the undertaker ! You turn to and hire one of ’em to make your garden in the spring o’ the year, and the boys was laughin’ and snickerin’ all over town to see sech works as he ’d most always make of it. I ain’t blaming the pore creeturs a mite ; I pity ’em most damly. They got their livin’s to git, and they ’re scratchin’ hard to git ’em. What I want to know is, are them kind liable to resicue Kentle’s Harbor ? Seems ’s though ef we cal’late for a preacher to git in any work of much account amongst us down here, he ’d ought to be able to *do* a little something more, ef he did n’t know no more than the rest-part of us. I wisht we might be so ’s to look up to our preachers, Cap’n. We ’d ought to be able to say, ‘ Look at what fine works Elder So-and-so is doin’ of right along,’ in room of always having to excuse him like, and say ‘ Good enough, considerin’ who done it ! ’ We want a preacher that can heave *us* a line, Cap’n Sheave, in room of our havin’ always and forever to take *him* in tow ! Them ain’t the kind to tackle a job that calls for an A No. 1 set o’ brains,

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and a big heart, and a body that's tough as a pine-knot!"

"Why, jest take and look right at it, half a minute, Cap'n Sheave. We'll supposen you've got an old played-out boat you want to git repaired-up again into some kind of decent shape. She's no earthly good at all to ye the way she is now, we'll say. She's nail-sick,¹ and wormy and rotten besides, but she's all the boat you've got, or are liable to git, and you've got pressin' need of a good able boat right away quick. Now bein' as she's nothin' only a poor wrack anyways, you may figger that most any old pod-auger² of a feller same's I be is plenty good enough to tinker her up so's she'll be some good to ye once more, but I tell you, Cap'n, there's jest where you're mistakened the very wust way! The wuss off your boat is, the better man ought to tackle repairin' of her up again so's she won't be liable to slide out from under ye the fust time ever you try luggin' sail on her. 'Tain't anyways raytionable to cal'late on gettin' a fust-class job out of ary fourth-class man, as I see, Cap'n, and still that ain't all the way there is to look at it, neither.

"You hire a man to calk up your little schooner

¹ Rusted out.

² A superannuated workman.

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down here, Cap'n. If he's anyways a stranger to ye, fust thing is to make pertikler inquiries to find out ef he knows his business, and can do ye a good day's work. You want to know whether he's used to new-work, or only jest to patchin' up old coasters and the like o' that. You're pertikler enough to find a man that ain't goin' to slight his job, nor spawl your seams all to flinders, ary one, but for the right man you don't begrutch payin' of him anywheres from three to four dollars a day. That's skilled labor, and fetches good wages, same's it ought to. If he comes across a hollow seam, or a bad butt, or a wormy plank, you cal'late he's goin' to tell ye, so 's you can have it taken right out or fixed the way it should be; that's part what you pay him for.

"Now you turn to and hire a man to come here and save souls; that's what he's here for, to save us from hell-fire, and 'cordin' to the way things are workin' here now'days, it's a job that calls for skilled labor the wust way, but seems's though you figger most anything that goes on two legs is good enough for that kind o' work, and all the pay you'll give is a scant dollar a day, and found. Good men ain't liable to tumble over themselves a-hustlin' for that job, be they, think? A man ain't goin' to git independent rich so very quick on that

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much pay, but he won't git even that long, without he goes to work jest the very way you folks want he should. You let him once undertake to tell you what ought to be done; what rotten wood had ought to be tore out, and so on, and by fire! his wages are docked double-quick, till bimeby, without he holds his mouth jest the way you folks say, he gets his walkin'-papers altogether!"

"'T ain't likely we cal'late to hire a preacher to stop here and heave slurs at us, same's some has," said Captain Sheave.

"Then turn to and rig up a reg'lar-built dummy, if that's all is wanted!" Obed retorted. "I'd lieveser myself set under a stuffed man than some o' the preachers that has stopped here the longest. Take Elder A, what did *he* do? How fur did he make out to shove ahead the cause of religion amongst our folks? Bought a fast horse and never paid for it; run up bills right and left, wherever he could git trusted for a cent; even beat them pore old Miss Grommetses out of a year's butter and garden-truck, and five cord o' hard wood afore he skipped out; he beat the whole Harbor, you may say. Take Elder B, how much better off was we here when *he* come to quit, than when he struck in preachin'? Don't we have plenty of disvose scrapes of our own, so's a preacher ain't need to come here

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to learn our folks any new wrinkles in regard to sich works?"

"I dunno as gittin' disvosed is any great ag'in a preacher," Captain Sheave said. "I'd lieveser ary preacher should git hisself a disvose if he don't like livin' along of his woman, than for him to jest quit and take up along of a better lookin' one, same 's what 's-his-name done."

"That's jest the very thing of it, Cap'n!" returned Obed Fairway. "Do you cal'late it done our young folks any good the way Elder C traipsed 'round along of that woman? Do you cal'late it made our folks any great sight more anxious to put out their money for preachers here to this Harbor?"

"Oh, wall, you!" Captain Jasper said, "that ain't no kind of a way, to take and pick out a couple of bad eggs same 's they was" —

"There 's been a good many couple to this Harbor, Cap'n Sheave; no use tryin' to rub that out!" said Obed; "but jest a couple of that kind will do us more hurt than ever you and me will live to see undone, I'm afraid. Betwixt preachers that wa'n't able to do us the least mite of good, and them that has done us no end of hurt, the man that cal'lates to raise money for preachin' to this Harbor at this day o' the world is going to pull

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the laborin' oar,¹ and no mistake ! Seems 's though the wuss we need good preachin', the less show we have of gitting it. I'll give what I'm able any day to keep a preacher, quick 's ever I see he 's liable to do the fust mite of good, but I know jest how the thing has worked of late years, and I'm pretty nigh discouraged."

"Wall, there, Uncle Obed," the Captain said as he rose to go, "'tain't no good to set down and cry baby. We got to have a preacher to this Harbor someways or 'nother. Boarders wants preachers so 's to kind o' kill time Sundays, and we'll never git us no great sight of boarders here summer-times, without we open up the meetin'-house again. Summer rusticators is what has got to build up this deestricht again, Obed. They've commenced to strike in a little grain, but we want to toll 'em along like, ef we cal'late to see any number of 'em here. You got to heave sprat to ketch salmon, they always used to tell me, Obed. Over to the Cape rusticators is gittin' to be consid'ble thick, they say, and buildin' up quite a little, too. I s'pose likely Clarry holds on to the P'int yit, don't she?" the Captain asked casually.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Master Fairway, "she 's

¹ To pull the leeward oar of a boat, that is, to have a hard time.

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got every foot ever she had, and is liable to keep it too, I guess."

"Wall, there 's consid'ble sightly locations down there, but I dunno as there 's many wants to put money into a heap of rocks and junipers," said Captain Sheave. "Now don't forgit to say a word for Lemmy, will ye, Uncle Obed? The boy 's all right as can be; all in the world he wants is a good clever little woman for ballast, like."

Here Captain Sheave winked knowingly at Master Fairway, and took his leave.

VII

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It often happened that fishermen of Kentle's Harbor were able to sell their fares of fish to better advantage by taking them some dozen miles to a larger market at the Cape. Early in January a full trip of fish secured by the men of the Good Intent was disposed of in this way.

On these occasions Robert Glynn always improved the opportunity of visiting his home for an hour or so at least, the length of his stay depending upon the direction of the wind and the chance for returning with the vessel to the Harbor. As soon as their fish were landed upon the wharf at this time, Glynn, as usual, started for his home. He had a bad cold, and as the vessel was to remain at the wharf till next morning at least, he declared his intention of spending the night at home, and "doctoring up." The wind was then blowing freshly from the eastward, nearly dead ahead, and wild looking bunches of scud hurried across a background of pale gray sky.

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On the deserted little custom-house at the head of the dock where the schooner lay, red and white northwest storm signals had snapped on their swaying staff since noon. Under like conditions of weather some time before, Skipper Asa might probably have started for home, but he had not seen Clara Fairway for several weeks, and was trying desperately to school himself into not thinking of her.

Next morning came a boy with a roughly scrawled note from Robert Glynn, in which he reported himself sick, and asked for his clothes and the money due him. Two others of the crew had remained at the Harbor attending to certain household duties, and Glynn's withdrawal left Skipper Asa somewhat shorthanded. He thought of shipping another good man of whom he knew in the town, but his cousin Joe Kentle begged to have the vacancy filled by an acquaintance at home who would probably be out of work in a few days. Joe Kentle reminded the skipper that their berths numbered but six, and that an extra man from the Cape might be delayed in returning at this season by the uncertain little steamer on the route.

This ancient top-heavy looking craft, most humorously described on countless red handbills as at once swift, elegant, the sea-going, was announced

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to touch (weather permitting) at Kentle's Harbor on certain days of the week, but when not taking advantage of the saving weather clause in her timetable by lying securely tied up to her wharf at the Cape, was commonly hauled off for repairs to hull or machinery. At present the venerable vessel lay heeled down on the adjacent beach. From beneath her bottom came the sharp tunk of calker's mallets ; the rudder lay unhung beside her in the hands of a smith, and to judge from the continuous din of hammers issuing from her engine-room, the archaic steam packet now suffered with a well-nigh total suspension of functions.

All the day the wind remained ahead, and at night gradually backing into the northwest, with the mercury evidently bent on a record-breaking plunge for the zero mark, the prospect of a comfortable trip home on the next day seemed dubious indeed.

Late in the afternoon Asa Kentle was loudly hailed from the wharf, and looking out, saw standing on the cap-log above a fresh-faced man somewhat older than himself ; perhaps a bit slighter in build, though this impression may have been owing to a long ulster, the collar of which almost concealed his close cropped-beard.

" Is this Cap'n Kentle ? " he asked.

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"That 's what they call me, sometimes," replied Asa.

"Can I get passage across to Kentle's Harbor with you? The Conqueror is n't likely to run for some days, they tell me."

"Why, yes, indeed, I 'll give you a passage acrost with us, soon 's ever there 's a chance," Asa said. "I can't say for sure when that 'll be, though. This wind has commenced to backen into the west'ard to-night, and my barometer is walking down to beat the band: I look to see it blow to-morrow fit to take all hell out by the roots, as the old feller said. You stoppin' ashore here?"

"Yes, just for the day," the stranger said. "My traps are up at the hotel. They told me there was a Kentle's Harbor boat lying here, and that seemed to be the only chance of getting over there. The steamer, I should say, is in a bad way."

"Yes, you don't want to count much on that thing," said Asa. "She can't get a move on much better 'n a toad in a bucket o' tar, anyways. I never see her movin' much of any more than a nach'al drift, yet. They don't take any chances with her, now'days, and not to blame neither!"

"Well," the stranger said, laughing, "you won't start before morning, I suppose, at any rate?"

"Noways likely," the skipper said decidedly.

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“Not before mornin’, if we do then. If she keeps on growing cold this way, by mornin’ ’t will be so thick-a-vapor we can’t see acrost this dock. ’T would n’t surprise me none if we were froze in solid. Come below out o’ the wind, won’t ye?” he added, though scarcely expecting the invitation to be accepted.

Somewhat to his surprise, the stranger at once leaned forward, and catching a shroud in either hand, swung himself down on the littered deck as if he had been doing the thing all his life.

“We ’ve got no great accommodations for passengers aboard here,” Asa Kentle said, as he led the way below, where a game of cards had evidently been interrupted. “We cal’late to keep well fired up down here, though, and that’s the main thing this weather.”

“Oh, this is solid comfort; this beats the hotel all hollow!” said the visitor. “I think I’ll have to shed my coat, though, while I’m here,” he added, taking off his outer garment. “Will you smoke?” said he, offering cigars to Asa and the other members of the crew.

Old Joe Kentle, having produced a card of matches, proffered them to the stranger.

“No, thank you,” he said. “I never smoked a whiff in my life.”

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“That so?” said Asa in surprise. “It’s seldom ever a man don’t smoke, and still has his pocket full of good cigars!”

“It does seem a little queer, perhaps,” said the other, with a smile which showed as fine a set of teeth as one could wish to see. “Sometimes I almost wish I had learned to use the weed, for you smokers seem to get so much fun out of it, but I never happened to get into the habit, and it hardly seems worth while to now. They say, though, you know, that people without the small vices are apt to have worse ones!”

“By fire, you!” exclaimed Joe Kentle, “’tain’t no great of a vice to smoke a cigar like that one, come now! That ain’t much like the ‘twofers’ we git down to Cap’n Ezry’s store to home! Tell you what, Mister, I wisht you might sell him a line o’ that brand when you git acrost to the Harbor! You’re runnin’ cigars, I s’pose likely, ain’t you?”

“No!” the stranger answered. “That’s one of the few things I never tried my hand at yet. I’ve never been on the road at all.”

“You’ve been to sea afore now, I’ll bate a hat!” said Skipper Asa. “I could see that by the way you come aboard of us just now.”

“That’s a pretty good guess, too! One way and another, since I was a boy I must have put in as

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much time afloat as ashore," the visitor said. "That was on the Pacific, though. I've hardly tried the Atlantic yet."

"I want to know!" Asa said. "I see you wa'n't from this way by your talk."

"Oh, I claim to be a pretty good Yankee after all!" laughed the other. "My grandfather and grandmother came from the Sheepscot River, — not so very far from here, you know. His name was Rowland, and there are some of that name there still."

"Why, yes, I know well there are," said the skipper. "I fished two winters out of Townsend in the old schooner Laban Rowland, that belonged over to Southport, right by the river, there."

"That's been a family name for I don't know how many years back," the visitor said. "I'm the third Laban Rowland that I know of."

"Well, well, I want to know if you are one o' them Sheepscot Rowlands!" the skipper exclaimed.

"Yes," said the other, "that's where I sprang from. My grandfather built a barque there in '49, and took his own and half a dozen other families around the Horn to California. My father married a girl out there who was less than a year from the State of Maine, so you see I claim I'm no foreigner here!"

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“To be sure you ain’t! Seems’s though there can’t be much outlandish-man about *you*, and that’s a fact! You been East here long this time?” asked the skipper, whose curiosity in regard to his caller was, like that of the men, considerably piqued.

In truth, the black transoms of the smoke-grimed little cabin, polished as they were by years of use into an ebony-like surface, never yet supported a person more likely to perplex the crew of a fisherman than the handsome, spectacled young man who now lounged back upon them, and occasionally thrust forth a hand into the warmth of the fire.

Strong, hard hands they were, too, with great cords that played at every motion of the fingers; hands evidently accustomed to heavy work, yet at present noticeably white and clean. There was about the man a winning air of good fellowship; for the time being at least he was a member of the schooner’s crew. He was plainly used to the present kind of company, and as plainly enjoyed it, yet to a man those of the Good Intent felt that their visitor was even more used to something quite different. Except during the summer months, the few strangers seen at Kentle’s Harbor were invariably regarded as drummers visiting the half dozen stores of the place. This man was avowedly not of them, and indeed, after the first few minutes’ conversation,

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could scarcely have been mistaken for one of that brotherhood.

“It’s over two years since I came East,” he said in reply to Asa’s inquiry. “I always had a feeling that I belonged on this side, perhaps because my people were never tired of praising New England and everything connected with it. I grew up with the idea that everybody and everything of much account must have originally come from New England, and in particular from this part of it. I used to be told continually of the chances for getting an education here, and how universally they were improved. I was always told of the high standard of morality that existed everywhere, and of the great interest that was taken in church matters, and all that sort of thing.

“I used to ask my father why our people ever left the East if it was so much better a country to live in, and used to be told that they made a great mistake when they sold out all they had here and left. Finally, when it happened that I could cut loose there and come this way to look about a little myself, I did it.”

“D’ye cal’late to stop ’round here a spell, maybe? Depends on how well you like, I s’pose, though,” said Asa Kentle.

“Well, yes; partly, I suppose,” the stranger

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said. "If you're at all anxious to hear," he continued, straightening up, "I'll tell you why I came East, and what has brought me down here just now. You're all from Kentle's Harbor, I take it!"

"Yes," Asa said, "we're all from the Harbor aboard here now. There's two more of us, all told."

"About the half of us aboard is named Kentle," added Joe Kentle with a grin.

"I'm glad to hear it," the visitor said. "And in case I should make any stay at Kentle's Harbor, I hope we'll get much better acquainted. Now, perhaps I'd best show my colors at once, and tell you that I'm going over there to preach next Sunday." Here the young man paused slightly, and gave a quick look about at his hearers, as if to note the effect of this announcement. The result was easily noticeable.

"The hell you are!" Joe Kentle exclaimed, and then to hide his confusion went into a violent fit of coughing. A chill seemed to fall upon the audience. All guiltily removed the cigars from their mouths, and drew long faces. Skipper Asa mechanically began to gather the cards from the table.

"Don't look so unhappy about it, boys!" cried the stranger, laughing heartily. "If I'm going to

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have the effect of a wet blanket in this way, there's no use in my going to Kentle's Harbor, or anywhere else to preach. I shall feel pretty badly if you are going to hold me at arm's length after we know each other better."

"Well, Elder," Asa said apologetically, "We never once mistrusted who you was, not a mite. I always claimed I could tell a preacher as fur as ever I could see him, but you beat me this time, and no mistake! You are about the last one ever I would pick out for a preacher; that is, fur as looks goes, I mean."

"Is that intended for a compliment, Cap'n?" the visitor asked, smiling.

"Well, yes," Asa answered after a moment's hesitation. "I guess you'll have to take it that way! Seems 's though you ain't been in the business long, have you?"

"No, I haven't. This will be only my second real attempt," was the reply. "It is nearly three years, though, since I began studying and trying to fit myself for this work. Let me tell you a little how it was with me; unless you've lost all interest now," he added a little ruefully.

"No, no, Elder!" Asa exclaimed. "Not a mite of it. Let her go, — er, that is, I mean we'd be real glad to hear."

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"I lost my parents when I was a boy," the minister began at once, "and had to go to work to get my living. I wanted an education badly enough, and managed to pick up what I could in one way and another. To cut a long story short, I did finally fit myself for the position of chief engineer on a Pacific liner, and that position I held for several years."

"No slouch of a job, neither," said Asa. "That is," he added, reddening, "a pretty good kind of a job, that was."

"Yes, it was n't a bad job at all," the other assented. "The pay was good, but I had my mind fixed on being a lawyer, and studied law on my own hook at every chance I could get. By degrees, though, I came to see that I never should make a success in that line. It may sound a little foolish to tell of, but the truth is, as far back as that, I had begun to want to do some sort of good in the world, — just how, I did n't very well know, or care greatly. I was ready to take hold wherever I felt I was most wanted, and by and by I imagined I ought to become a missionary in some of the Eastern countries I had visited.

"About this time a small sum of money was left to me unexpectedly, and, on the strength of this, with what I had already saved, I came East here,

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partly to study for the ministry, and partly because I had such a longing to see New England, which, for some reasons, always seemed like home to me."

"You 've give up the idea of mish'naryin', then, have you?" asked Asa Kentle.

"No, not altogether," was the reply. "I'll tell you how I've come to feel about that. For the last two summers I have spent a good deal of time mousing about in this region, — last summer I was a month or more skirmishing about this very part of the coast. The result of it all is, I feel very sure that there's plenty of work cut out for a man, or for any number of them, right here at home. That's where charity should begin, you know."

"Yes, so I've heard say," said Asa. "The plain English of it is, you cal'late now that us folks down this way stand in need of preachin' and lookin' after full as bad as the Chinees, and all the rest-part of them heathen outlandishmen."

"That's rather a harsh way to put it, Cap'n," the minister said with a smile. "I would rather say I'm mighty sure in my own mind that no man need strike off thousands of miles into foreign countries in order to find work enough of this sort."

"I always run away with the idea that the heft of them kind took to mish'narying 'round because it

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give 'em a good chance to see the world consid'ble, and same time pick up a pretty fair kind of a living out of it," Skipper Asa said bluntly.

"I know that 's a very common view of the thing," said the minister, "and no doubt there may be something in it, too, but my experience is that they are much more apt to be cases of misdirected energy. Very few people in the country really know of the pressing need of work that has arisen right here at home. I'm sure I did n't myself; I had n't the least idea of such a thing till just by chance I was led to look into the matter pretty thoroughly. Of course I knew that a great deal of necessary work was being done among the foreign population of large cities of late, but that there was any such condition of things in good old Yankee land I could hardly believe. I think the majority of people won't believe it, either. They seem to prefer shutting their eyes to the whole thing; and I find there 's nothing easier than to stir up a hornet's nest any day by claiming that in our great zeal for reforming the rest of the world in general we've allowed a pretty large field for work, and hard work at that, to develop right here close under our noses, you may say."

"I guess likely you're all right there, Elder," the skipper said, "and you'll be able to put it

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stronger than that if only you stop this way long enough. You won't hurt my feelings a mite by talking right out good and plain, for I feel just the way you do about it. If there's any city-places that need shaking up and airing out and overhauling all 'round worse 'n some o' these little country places I could name over to you, why all is, God help the city-places! You'll have to talk with old Cap't Trunnel when you get over home there, Elder. He'll shake hands with you on this matter, I don't doubt, for it's always one of his great sayings that it's a pity if our own folkses' souls ain't just as much account as 'them Greeks and all such plague-gone Hindoos,' as he calls 'em. Old Cap'n claims there's no end of good money for getting holt of 'them Greeks and other Hindoos,' but same time here's any God's quantity of our own folks right to home here growing about as bad off as ever they can be, and precious few fitting style of preachers to undertake giving 'em a lift, for fear of starving to death themselves at the job! It looks a good deal that way to me too, Elder, though I ain't no judge, but why would n't it be full better to take the heft of that mish'nary money, for a spell anyways, and put it out right to home here, giving good fittin' preachers a half-decent living at least, while they try and see what they can do for us? I believe that's all the

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way ever you 'll keep a good preacher alive in lots of these little small places now'days, and a poor one is worse 'n none! Seems's though we've had *that* rubbed into us there to the Harbor in pretty good shape! You've got to take and plant a good man, and take care of him for a spell, till maybe after a while he'll get a holt, and be able to go it alone, for let me tell you Elder, that without you're independent rich, if ever you cal'late on stopping long to Kentle's Harbor, you'll have to be extra careful how you go treading on folkses' corns! You don't want to see nor hear only about so much without you can figure your grub bill down pretty fine. Of course, allowin' you're independent rich, why that's another thing. That's a breed of preachers we never had much dealin's with down this way."

"Guess it's safe to bate Cap'n Sheave won't cal'late to swaller no great sight of back-talk from ary preacher now'days!" declared Joel Kentle, who had just recovered speech after his recent bad break.

"Cap'n Sheave? Cap'n Jasper Sheave, is it?" the minister asked.

"Yes, sir, that's him," said Joel. "He started in to run the meetin'-house over home there a short spell ago. I heard say the other day the old sir had

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went to work and bought up the mortgage on her. You anyways acquainted along of him?"

"No, not at all, only he must be the man whose letters I have seen," answered the minister. "The writing was none of the clearest, and no one seemed able to make out the last name exactly, but that's it; Jasper Sheave. What sort of man is Cap'n Jasper?"

"Well," Asa said, with a laugh, "there's no love lost between us, I guess, and so, perhaps, I'm prejudiced. 'T won't take you long to find out yourself what he's made of, if you stop long with us!"

"I don't make no bones of tellin' you pretty quick what he is!" exclaimed the third man of the crew. "He's the dirtiest old lying hypocrite ever drawed the breath o' life! He makes off jest now he's got religion bad, — real bad, he allows; but there ain't a man to the Harbor that knows him would trust him alone along of a red-hot stove for a minute! He'd take and steal the cents off'n a dead man's eyes, that feller would, and then go and make his brags about it afterwards."

"He'd call that a 'shrewd move,'" added Joel Kentle. "There's been some consid'ble tough specimens had their say about runnin' the meetin'-house there to home of late years, but I guess no-

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body ever expected to see Cap'n Jasp step up and take the wheel same 's he has! It 'll be a meracle ef he don't cast her away altogether, I'm thinkin'. The old reynuck ain't took holt up there for love o' God nor man neither, without it's hisself. Everybody knows that, well as can be. Some says he cal'lates to git more trade to his store out of it; and some thinks it's more rusticators he's lookin' after, summer-times; but he's heaving bait for something, that's sure as death and taxes. I don't pretend to be noways posted, but I know well that Jasper Sheave seldom ever makes a move unless'n he has an axe to grind, same's the most of 'em that has their say up to the meetin'-house at this day o' the world. They jest git up there and lug sail awful hard, some of 'em doos, trying to make out they're all carried away with religion, jest a-purpose to hide their own deviltry, — I mean their own — er " —

"Deviltry is a good word," put in the minister quietly. "I find it useful myself quite often."

"What I mean," Joel went on, with 'only temporary embarrassment, — "what I mean, you know, Elder, is folks that have been called the biggest herbs¹ up there to the meetin' house afore this have been known to rob them that was cast away in

¹ Important men.

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wracks around here out of their last dollar, and then try to git out of it by sayin', 'Oh, good gracious, you! 'Tain't me that done it! Jest only look at how I 'tend out on meetin' of a Sunday! Look at how reg'lar I stan' up and pray to our Thursday evening meetin's! Me tetch of a thing that wa'n't mine? 'Tain't anyways likely!' I tell you what, Elder," Joel continued, "I was quite a spell into the Life Savin' Station over acrost right handy-by to the Harbor, and the high jinks we seen to wracks sometimes was scand'lous and no mistake; but it's God's own truth that the very worst works ever we seen tried on to wracks was by them that claimed to be extry pious style of folks. Let me jest take and tell you, Elder, what I heard an old cap'n say one time in regards to them things. I heard this old sir eighty-odd year old, that had been into wracks and scrapes 'most everywhere salt water flowed, I heard him stand right up man-fashion one time and say like this: 'As true's ever I live and breathe,' says he, 'ef I was to be cast away again with my vessel, I'd lieveser take chances on the coast of Patagony, or the Feejee Islants, any old place on the face o' God's whole footstool that ever I been yit,' says he, 'in room of right here to home plumb in sight of church steeples!' That's what you may call

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spittin' of it right out consid'ble plain, Elder, but that's jest how he looked at it, and he wa'n't no outlandish man neither; he was a born and bred towney of ourn, that had been away to sea the most of his life, and come back home here to settle down and take his comfort,—he loved dearly to go to meetin', the old sir did; but he allowed he had to quit for the reason the works he seen up there now'days riled him up so he could n't take no peace of his life!"

"I know," said Mr. Rowland with a sigh, "I know it's an old, old story, this making a great show of religion as a cloak to cover rascality. There's enough of it everywhere, but I must say you seem to be especially cursed with it about here at present. I take it none of you go to church much nowadays."

"We ain't in the habit of troublin' the church much of any, that's a fact," Asa admitted.

"You think you get along full as well without anything of the sort, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, that's about it," replied Asa. "I seldom ever feel as though I needed just that sort myself. Maybe you don't know exactly what the sort is we're apt to get up there. I'll tell you the particular sort that turned my father's poke¹ for

¹ Disgusted him.

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the rest-part of *his* life. 'T was the Sunday I was ten year old, only a short spell after mother died. It was the dead o' winter time, and old Elder —— was preachin' here. Saturday night father come home from the west'ard with his vessel, and fetched me a brand-new sled; a real pretty one and no mistake, so 's I was just about tickled to death with her. Well, after breakfast Sunday I took her out in our back yard, and I wanted to try her for a slide, oh, so bad! But I never, for quite a spell, — I hung off like a good one, till finally seems 's though I just had to give her one little try down through the garden back of the house. I was all soul alone, mind you; no noise nor shindy of any sort going on to disturb nobody at all. I set down and took jest one slide down to the picket fence at the foot of the garden. On the other side of the fence was the road, and just the very minute I fetched up down there, old elder had to come along with quite a few others, goin' to meetin'. He stopped her right up short.

“ ‘Boy!’ says he, ‘Do you know you’re slidin’ right straight to hell fast as ever you can go?’ ”

“ Well, sir, he stood there then, before all them other folks, and give me Hail Columby in good shape; he read me the riot-act and the dog-law, and I don’t know what not, till I was ’most scairt out of

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a year's growth, I know, anyways. That evening father took me and the rest-part of us to meeting, same's usual. Elder —— he stands right up and gives out that the subject of his discourse that evening would be 'Slidin' to Hell,' and he turned to right then and give me and my folks the very worst old settin' up that ever you heard in your life! For fear everybody there did n't know already just who he was hittin' at, and all about the whole thing, he kept pointin' his finger right plumb at our pew, till all of a sudden father up and yanked the whole kit of us outdoors, and allowed he was done with goin' to meetin' at the Harbor. Seem's if that was a case where the elder did n't lack for courage noways, but his judgment was none of the best, same's they said about old Skipper Saul Grommet, the time he plunked his vessel right atop of Gangway Laidge in broad daylight! Next spring father was lost, but I've never set foot inside the meetin'-house since. I know pretty much what goes on up there though, as a rule, and guess I never lost much of anything by giving her a wide berth.

“Take it when we're laying over here of a Sunday, the whole of us 'most always go up to meeting. There's a man up street here a short piece that I'd walk five mile to hear talk any day o' the week, — it's as good as a square meal to anybody, but when

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you come right down to the truth of the matter, Elder, I think there 's very few of the style preachers we get over home there that do the first bit of good to a livin' soul. Sometimes I get to thinking we 'd be full better off over there all around, to take and close up the meetin'-house outright."

" Well, friends," the minister said gravely, "you are frank enough, certainly, and I'm very glad to have talked with you. It is n't a pretty picture you've called up between you, but still it is n't very unlike what I expected to find. I'm going over to Kentle's Harbor to stay for a time at least, and shall do the best I can. If I can't do any better than has been done, apparently I can't do much worse. I give you all the warmest kind of an invitation to come and hear some of my plans at any rate. Let's have at least one good chance to talk matters over together. If I can't interest you, probably you won't come again, that's all; but I don't think I shall be starved out very easily as long as I can feel that any headway is being made. I'll be around early in the morning, skipper, to see if you intend starting; but don't sail without me!"

The minister then shook hands warmly with all and returned to the hotel.

" Godfrey mighty!" exclaimed Joel Kentle, examining his right hand apparently with much soli-

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citude, "that feller may be a reg'lar-built preacher now, but he don't look it, and there ain't no part of an invaleed about him yit-a-while, ef he is! He like to have squshed my hand into porgy-chum!"¹

"Same here!" cried the third man of the crew. "Guess, thinks I, I'm ketched into a bear trap all right this time, and no mistake! I wonder was there ever such another style preacher as that sence Adam was an oakum boy! No lugs at all about him: jest as common and everyday like as you please, and don't smoke hisself, but same time keeps a pocketful of proper good cigars jest to put out to folks! I cal'late he's pretty nigh the pure thing! Why, Joe here, he set and talked along of him for all the world same's he would to another man! Ain't that a fact, Joe?"

"That's about the size of it!" assented Joel Kentle. "He's all the preacher that ever I wanted two words of truck along of yit; but this one doos talk out kind of man-fashion; I'll say that much for him, anyways!"

"Somehow I rather like the cut of that chap's jib, too, and no getting around it, neither!" declared Skipper Asa. "He talks pretty nigh the mark, accordin' to my way of thinking, but he's going to get into hot water over home there, in about two

¹ Porgies ground into bait.

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shakes of a ram's tail. I give him a month at the outside, before he'll have to pack his dunnage and dust! We'll have to go up and hear him once, though, soon 's ever he starts in preaching!"

VIII

A CLOSE CALL

NEXT morning the sun rose into a narrow strip of frigid looking sky, through which for some moments it shed a sickly yellow light only too ominous of increasing cold. At some time during the blustering night there had been a light fall of snow, — in local parlance, a “flirt of snow,” — and as the Rev. Mr. Rowland let himself out of the rather squalid appearing little hostelry garishly labeled “Mansion House,” his breath was nearly taken away by a whirling icy blast charged with cutting particles of hard snow which glittered most wickedly in the freezing half-sunshine.

Soon the gray curtain of cloud closed down over the brassy streak in the east, and the deadly cold wind for which all Yankeedom might well owe the Northwest an undying grudge swept the sifting snow from the roofs in streaming white clouds. In places it scoured the uneven streets into long stretches of flinty bareness ; across the sidewalk elsewhere it packed a gritty mixture of snow and dust into hard curling drifts that fairly squealed with cold under

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the minister's feet as he buffeted his way towards the wharves with eyes almost closed and moustache fast congealing.

The upper part of the custom-house dock was frozen solidly. Farther down and outside its mouth all traces of water were obliterated by dense volumes of steam that rose from its surface and rolled off with the gale to leeward at race-horse speed.

Mr. Rowland swung himself again on board the schooner, and went at once to the forward companion-way.

"Hello, Cap'n Kentle?" he called. "What do you say this morning? Had I best get my dunnage aboard?"

"I guess you ain't need to hurry any great, Elder," said Asa, as he looked out. "The day is young yet, and prob'ly it won't be so thick-a-vapor a couple of hours from now. I guess likely we'll get a slant acrost betwixt now and night-time, but 't won't be any pleasure sail to-day, and I won't say for sure as we'll try it on at all. 'T would be a clear case of 'oil-up' and pound ice for some of us, I'm thinking!"

"I don't doubt it at all," the minister said. "I'll buy a suit of oilskins as I come down."

"Oh, no need to buy yourself none; we got a

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plenty aboard here," said Asa; "but I guess if we should conclude to start, you'd find it good enough for you below here, going acrost in this chance. This little packet will bail water over her just one steady stream to-day, and every drop that comes aboard is bound to freeze solid quick's ever it strikes. Don't you bother with no oilskins, for if we should try it, we'll detail you to stop below and tend fire! Come down now and mug up along of us, won't you? You won't get no breakfast up to the hotel yit-a-while. Better come below and try a dish of cook's hot tea to warm up with!"

"Thank you, thank you," Mr. Rowland said as he turned to go. "I don't think I will stay now. I'll take a walk about the place by way of a little exercise this balmy morning!"

"Balmy mornin' in your eye!" Asa muttered, closing the slide again. "What do you fellows think of that?" he said to the men below. "Here 't is blowing right out endways, cold enough to make a rabbit shed tears, and still the parson allows he's got to cool his blood walking the streets a spell before he can eat a mouthful this 'balmy mornin',' as he calls it!"

"I cal'late the man needs a guardeen the wust way, swear I do!" cried old Joel Kentle. "He don't supposen we're goin' acrost this weather, doos he?"

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Must cal'late we owe ourselves a ter'ble bad grutch, someways or 'nother!"

"Oh, well, you," said Skipper Asa, "Seems 's though this ain't nothin' to *him*! Seems 's though it's a reg'lar summer lake on the water to-day, to what they have it out where he come from!"

"Jest the samey," insisted Joel, "I ain't scairt to bate that all the fur ¹ ever he'd want to go outside this mornin' aboard of us would be jest down to the top o' the P'int,² there! That would be plenty furthenough³ to make him horn up same 's a burnt boot, now you tell your folks! The man dunno what it is to buck into it aboard a little smoke-boat same 's this one, in the winter-time!"

"By fire, though!" the skipper exclaimed, "I'm not so sure about his squealing so easy! There's nothin' the leastways nash about any man that goes out pleasurin' round before breakfast this kind of weather! I ain't noways sure as he'd want to find a hole in the beach so much sooner than the rest-part of us! Quick 's ever you get your dishes washed and stowed away solid, Joe, we'll turn to and tuck in close reefs, I guess."

"Great Scott! You don't cal'late to try it on this mornin', do ye, though?" cried Joel Kentle.

"Oh, I think we'll have to run out a piece by and

¹ As far as.

² End of the point.

³ Far enough.

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by, and have a look at it anyways," Skipper Asa said. "You don't want it should be talked 'round that the whole kit of us was stumped by no parson from out West, do you? If he 's all so feather-white for a yachting trip this balmy mornin', what 's the matter with striking her for home, and giving him his bellyful for once?"

"All right! Jest the way you say about it, of course!" said Joel very promptly. "You 're skipper, and when you say 'go,' the rest-part of us ain't much in the way of hangin' back no great! I want to be home bad enough myself, for the woman was gittin' short of wood when we left."

An hour or two later Mr. Rowland again appeared alongside, this time bringing his valise. On his hands were a pair of heavy white fishermen's mittens, and a new suit of yellow oilskins was bursting its paper wrappings under his arm.

"I 'm always on hand, like a sore thumb, you see," he said. "This vapor is thinning out a little, is n't it?"

"I guess maybe it has scaled just a dite," said Asa, looking about him rather doubtfully.

"The wind, though, is something fearful," the minister continued, as he passed down his belongings. "I think I must have nipped one of my ears this morning, from the feeling."

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“Oh, set-fire, Elder!” exclaimed Joel Kentle, who was at work reefing the mainsail. “I only hope, then, you won’t run into no what-you-may call real cold weather while you’re down-east here! This ’ere to-day is nothin’, only a kind of a ‘snow-eater,’ like! I call this weather mortifyin’ down consid’ble muggy myself, jest now! Whew! I’m all of a sweat a’ready! Below there, steward! Fetch me up a fan!” and sitting down upon the low cabin-trunk, Joel gravely began to fan himself with his heavy Scotch cap.

“I’m afraid I must be softening up a bit then,” laughed Mr. Rowland. “‘Getting nash,’ I’ll have to learn to say, ‘if ever I cal’late’ to pass myself off for a good salt water down-easter,” he said with a sly glance at the skipper.

But the touch was wholly lost upon Asa, who having stowed away his passenger’s baggage, had fallen to work helping make ready for a start. It required no little pounding and cutting of ice with oars to back the vessel out of the dock, but being at length clear, sail was quickly made, and under close reefed mainsail and jib the Good Intent was off for home, as Joel Kentle put it, “same’s a scalt hog.”

For the greater part of the way, a wind from the present quarter was favorable, and aside from the

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inevitable discomfort of such a trip, the only real trouble to be apprehended was from the blinding vapor, and the certainty of icing up to a greater or less extent.

Mr. Rowland positively refused to stay below, but togged out in oilskins from head to foot, and wearing a borrowed pair of clumsy red "kags" instead of his own boots, endeavored in many ways to make himself useful, though evidently much handicapped from an unfamiliarity with craft of the vessel's rig and small tonnage. His chief difficulty seemed to lie in the quick motions of the little schooner in the seaway, and though moving about on a steep deck fast becoming encased in ice was no easy matter to any on board, after getting out where the full force of wind and sea was felt, the minister found it simply impossible to keep his feet. Not only was the deck itself slippery and uncertain to the last degree, but every object upon it, or within reach of it, which might ordinarily have afforded some support, was quickly covered with the treacherous coating, till after a series of falls and hair-lifting slides to leeward, Laban Rowland acknowledged himself beaten, and, much to the relief of all, was content to remain aft, wedged in a position of security.

Two thirds of the distance across had been trav-

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ersed, when ice formed so heavily forward that Joel Kentle and the other man undertook to beat clear the jib-traveler in readiness for several miles of windward work soon to be entered upon. After the traveler had been freed of its accumulation, they turned their attention to the anchors and ground-tackle lying upon deck. One anchor had been pounded clear, when with a crack like the report of a rifle the main boom snapped short off in the slings. Luckily the vessel was at the time in comparatively smooth water under the lee of an island the skipper had for some time been anxious to make, and at once realizing that working to windward with the disabled mainsail was out of the question, he decided to anchor and attempt repairs.

At the top of his voice he ordered the men forward to take in the jib, while he himself put the helm hard down. The two men sprang to the jib-halliards, but found them so clogged with ice that it was impossible to cast them off quickly, when seeing their difficulty, Mr. Rowland at once clambered forward to assist.

Meantime the schooner came into the wind, and her two sails were slatting most furiously, with a deafening noise. The minister, intent only on being of assistance, unwarily came within scope of the heavy jib-sheet blocks, and received from them in

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their wild gyrations a terrific blow which shattered his glasses into a thousand fragments and sent him reeling backwards straight over the rail before the two men close to him realized what had happened.

But Skipper Asa saw the whole affair from the wheel, and catching up the main-sheet, rushed to the side and threw a bight of the rope with so good an aim that it struck Mr. Rowland fairly across the back. He, however, made no attempt either to seize it or to save himself by swimming, and Asa then noticed with dismay that the water about him was discolored by blood. In half a dozen rips that sent the buttons flying over the deck, Asa Kentle tore off his suit of oilskins, and kicking his heavy sea boots into the scuppers, despite the slippery footing disappeared over the vessel's stern with a running jump that would have done credit to any track athlete.

In no one way did Asa Kentle differ more notably from most other young men of the Harbor than in his ability to swim strongly. It was a strange truth that among all those at present earning their living upon the water in one way and another, less than half a dozen were able to swim a stroke. In the mysteries of policy and like amusements the majority were well versed. As the merest children most of them smoked, chewed,

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and swore incessantly ; boys in their early teens bragged openly of the amount of rum they could walk off with, but marbles and peg-top, leap-frog and swimming were all equally unknown to the youth of Kentle's Harbor in the year of our Lord 189-.

When Skipper Asa, confident in his own rare skill and endurance as a swimmer, jumped so unhesitatingly after the minister, whose bright yellow suit the driving vapor already nearly hid from sight, his men rushed to the nest of dories lashed on deck, and made frantic efforts to launch one, but they were frozen solidly together, and not even a loose thwart or oar could be found to throw after the skipper. Crippled as the mainsail was, it seemed hopeless to try and pick the men up with the vessel. The only possible chance of saving them, and that a slim one, appeared to lie in getting a dory cut loose, and this attempt the two men now began with desperate energy.

Meantime the jib, which was an old one and brittle with ice, had thrashed itself into streaming shreds. The mainsail, though disabled, still sufficed to hold the vessel's head into the wind somewhat, and having quickly lost headway, she was now rapidly falling astern ; in fact was already nearly abreast the skipper, who could plainly be seen close

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aboard, and struggling hard to support the lifeless form of the Rev. Mr. Rowland.

Suddenly becoming aware of this, Joel Kentle and his companion hurried aft, and exerting all their strength upon the main-sheet, succeeded in trimming the broken boom still closer inboard, and thus swerving the fast drifting vessel farther in the direction of the skipper. At precisely the right moment the anchor was let go, and as the schooner brought up on the snapping cable, her stern swung quickly around until Asa Kentle came within reach of a bowline dexterously tied by Joel in the end of the main-sheet.

Through this means Asa and the unconscious minister were at length got on board the vessel, though by this time the plucky skipper was nearly as helpless as the other. Both were at once taken below, where Asa soon revived to a great extent, but Mr. Rowland's case proved serious indeed. Fortunately Joel Kentle had served for some years in the Life Saving Station near the Harbor, and in consequence was well drilled in the work now so necessary. Under his expert treatment the stunned and nearly drowned minister finally regained consciousness, and bundled up in blankets was stowed away in a bunk.

“ You took the worst kind of chances by jump-

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ing after me in that way, skipper," he said faintly to Asa. "I appreciate well enough that you saved my life by risking your own as not one man in a hundred thousand would have done!"

"Oh, well, there you, Elder!" said Asa Kentle, "I never figured I was taking any such big risks as what you say. I see right off you was stunded by that clip over the eye, and wa'n't in no kind of shape to help yourself. Why, you could n't bled no worse if you 'd busted an arter! To tell the honest truth, though, I never once thought about the dories being all froze down that way, but if I had, I should felt sure these fellows would rigged up some ways to resicue us. They ain't neither one of 'em apt to get anyways rattled quick's ever things don't work just the very same way they cal'lated on!"

"I owe my life to you all, boys, and shall never forget it," said Mr. Rowland again.

"There, there, Elder, you best lay still and keep quiet a spell now, and let it go at that," Asa said quickly.

Fearing the effect of such a severe experience upon his passenger, Skipper Kentle was now doubly anxious to reach home, and after a hot dinner, much against the others' advice, insisted on helping to get the vessel under way again. A small three-

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cornered riding-sail was bent upon the broken boom, and with a whole foresail to offset the lack of a jib, the Good Intent reached Kentle's Harbor shortly before dark. Mr. Rowland then declared that he felt well enough to go ashore at once, but on learning that there was no public house in the place, yielded to Asa's protestations, and remained on board till morning.

The weather had then improved somewhat; the wind had blown itself out in a measure, and the temperature was, as the Harborites were wont to put it, 'mortifying down,' probably for a heavy fall of snow.

Aside from a sore head the minister asserted that he was then as well as ever, and after breakfast landed with the skipper at a point nearest the house of Captain Jasper Sheave, whom he wished first to see. Asa begged to carry his heavy valise, but to this Mr. Rowland positively refused to listen. He started up the narrow road with a vigorous step, and jokingly offered to race his companion up the next hill. Their way led directly past the house of Master Fairway, and when abreast of the old man's shop Mr. Rowland suddenly dropped his burden, put his hands to his head, staggered, and would have fallen in a dead faint but for Asa's timely support.

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The shop door was flung open, and out rushed Obed Fairway. A moment after, Clara and her aunt came hastening from the house.

“What’s the matter of him, dear?” cried Master Fairway, as he seized one arm of the limp form. “Who is it, you, for the land’s sakes?”

“It’s the new preacher Cap’n Jasp has got,” replied Asa. “He’s fainted away clean gone! He come acrost from the Cape aboard of us, you see, and got a master clip in the head from the jib-sheet blocks, — just knocked galley-west, he was, and stunded so’s he never give a rap whether school kept or not, for an hour’s time!”

“Godfrey mighty! You don’t tell me! Fetch him right into the house!” Uncle Obed cried. “Here, Clarry, you! Ketch a holt and give us a lift on him! Set-fire, but ain’t he a dead weight. What? There ain’t a mite of conscience left into the pore feller!”

Clara Fairway needed no urging to assist. She and her aunt both helped in good earnest to bear the minister inside and place him upon a lounge in the sitting-room, where, after various restoratives had been given, signs of life slowly returned.

“There he comes to! He’s gittin’ back his conscience all right!” cried Master Fairway with much relief. “You’ll be O. K. again in a minute

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now, neighbor! We'll jest have you feelin' same's a blame' fightin' cock afore ever you know it!"

"S-s-h! Father, you! Remember he's a preacher!" exclaimed good Mrs. Fairway anxiously.

"Well, what of it? S'posin' he is a one; he ain't noways liable to up and bite, is he?" her husband retorted. "A preacher ain't nothin' only a man, and the heft we've had here of late ain't been scursely that!" he added in a lower tone.

"Father Fairway! How can you!" whispered his wife reproachfully.

Then followed an awkward pause. All suddenly seemed to realize for the first time the changed conditions under which Asa Kentle now appeared again in their midst, after so long an absence.

"Well, I guess I better be moving down along," he soon said.

"Oh, Asy, don't go yet!" Clara Fairway cried impulsively; and then she at once added, "Do wait till the poor man comes to, at any rate!"

Asa had thus far studiously avoided looking Clara in the face, but now as she spoke he inadvertently glanced up at her.

The girl's lovely eyes were filled with tears, and her lip quivered pitifully as she met his look. At that moment, had they been alone, Asa Kentle must

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certainly have caught Clara in his arms and kissed away the tears from her sweet face. As it was, he managed to restrain himself, and checked the growth of a fast increasing lump in his throat only by recalling that Master Fairway believed him guilty of murder, and that Clara, he tried hard to think, must believe him at least a liar.

“You have n’t told us a word about your — about how the Elder got hurt so badly,” Clara continued tremulously.

“Why, yes, I told you he was hit by a block yesterday,” said Asa evasively. “I’ll have to be going now. I guess I better step in to the doctor’s and send him right over.

To the doctor Asa Kentle thought it necessary to give a brief account of the whole affair. On reaching Master Fairway’s, and examining his patient, the doctor at once ordered him to bed, where he remained for several days. It was several more before he was allowed out of doors, and when he preached his first sermon at Kentle’s Harbor, the Rev. Mr. Rowland had so favorably impressed the Fairways that he was accepted as a boarder in their household.

IX

MR. ROWLAND CHANGES HIS QUARTERS

LABAN ROWLAND never had brothers or sisters; and especially after going to sea on long voyages, his life had been somewhat a lonesome one. He had seen much less of women's society than most men of his age, and among acquaintances was credited with caring but little for it. Most of the time not occupied at the various vocations which he had followed, he regularly divided between study and physical culture, and in the latter respect, at least, Rowland felt tolerably well satisfied with the result.

Though by no means a heavy man, his muscles were hardened and developed to an extent which astonished even the rugged crew of the schooner, as they stripped him in the cabin after his rescue.

Cases of love at first sight Laban Rowland had read or heard of always with an air of amused incredulity, yet the plain truth of the matter was, that no sooner had he opened his eyes and fully regained consciousness in the spare bedroom of Master Fairway's house at Kentle's Harbor than he promptly fell in love with Clara Fairway after

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the most approved fashion. It took him some little time to realize this fact fully, but realize it he did at last, and struggled long and hard against what he was then pleased to consider in the light of a culpable weakness.

In his own mind he reviewed the situation with feelings little short of utter disgust. "Laban Rowland," he said to himself, "you imagined that you were fired with a high resolve to do good; you fooled yourself into believing that you were called upon to arouse and stimulate and help improve a neglected section of your country badly enough in need of help, yet presto, change! In twenty-four hours you can't keep a thought in your head except for a brown-haired young girl in a gingham dress, of whom you actually know next to nothing! Better go back to the Pacific coast at once, and take your old position on the steamer, if you are lucky enough to get it, or at least try somewhere to find work of which you are capable!

"But no!" he further reflected, "I can't turn tail in that way. I'm 'up against it now,' no doubt, but perhaps it was bound to come in time, and I might as well down such foolishness now as later on."

Hitherto, when confronted by temptations, the young man had invariably sought to maintain his position in the narrow path of duty by a square

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knock-down encounter, rather than through any avoidance of the enemy. So after much prayerful consideration of the matter, instead of seeking other lodging in the village, as he at one time thought of doing, the Rev. Laban Rowland decided that it was his duty to remain in his present quarters, and attempt the difficult task of steeling himself against the many distracting attractions of Clara Fairway, simply by way of further qualifying himself for the good work he hoped to do.

In pursuance of this rigorous course of discipline which the young minister thus heroically laid out for himself, while never seeking the company of Clara Fairway, he made no effort to avoid her, and at the end of the first fortnight after his recovery Laban Rowland fully appreciated that he was indeed engaged in the struggle of his life.

As for Clara herself, she remained in total ignorance of their lodger's condition of mind. She liked him greatly, and showed it plainly. Especially while he was confined to the house during the healing of his wound, her sympathetic nature prompted many little attentions. She cooked various delicious puddings and delicacies avowedly for him. She waited upon him constantly, and in the pleasantest low voice imaginable read the newspaper to them all in the cosy sitting-room.

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Meantime the Rev. Laban Rowland lay on the softly pillowed lounge she had arranged for him, and thrilled at the very look of her, at every accent of her voice, and at every sound she made in moving quietly about the room. Afterwards, he tossed half the night on his bed in the chamber overhead, and prayed for strength to stand the test.

But as the days went on, and the young minister found himself growing none the less susceptible to the charms of the frank, warm-hearted girl, there came times when he felt that he must either get away outright, or yield to the spell she so unwittingly cast upon him. After all, he grew to think sometimes, celibacy formed no part of his creed. Why was it necessary that he continue punishing himself so cruelly by stubbornly sticking to his own mere whim of not marrying, or at least not until certain work had been accomplished! Was there really any good and sufficient reason why he should not try to win the girl? Laban Rowland was at times nearly ready to admit that nothing but his own mulishness prevented an attempt which he persuaded himself might not be unsuccessful.

Unless she had a lover outside the place, Rowland felt it reasonable to assume that he had little to fear in the way of rivalry, for with the possible

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exception of Asa Kentle, he had as yet encountered no one among the young men of the town to whom he could for a moment believe Clara Fairway tenderly attached. Certainly, to the best of his knowledge neither Asa Kentle nor any other young man had called at the house during his stay, and Clara herself had been at home each evening regularly.

Rowland had more than once remarked the girl's somewhat sad demeanor, and was inclined to ascribe it to a certain loneliness of her life in the village. While the treatment of her by her uncle and aunt was always kindness itself, the minister plainly saw that in many respects their ways were not hers, nor her tastes their tastes. He discovered that Clara Fairway was, like himself, intensely musical, and that she had a glimmering of something in music far beyond the deadly mawkishness of the modern Gospel Hymns which, attractively bound in pea-green pasteboard covers, came with her uncle's frippery black walnut cased organ.

He also found that she was a reader, and that among her most prized possessions were several good books which had belonged to her mother, together with numbers more of her own collecting. This seemed the more noteworthy, because aside from the solitary gilded tome displayed in windows of the more aspiring Front Rooms, books of any

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description whatever were conspicuous by their absence in nearly all houses of Kentle's Harbor.

But Laban Rowland entirely missed his guess at the cause of the unhappiness which, try as she might, Clara Fairway could not always conceal. The estrangement with Asa Kentle told heavily upon the girl, and the more so as time passed and brought no hoped-for change in conditions.

The minister had repeatedly related with great enthusiasm how the young skipper unhesitatingly plunged into the icy waters to save him, and each time noticed with increasing surprise the apparently unmoved manner in which his recital was received by Master Fairway. Clara herself was always outspoken enough in her praise of Asa Kentle's heroism, and her heart thumped, and her face flushed hot with pride each time she listened to the Elder's unstinted eulogies of him.

At an early opportunity Mr. Rowland made outside inquiries concerning Asa Kentle's relations with the old man, and though not then happening to learn of the engagement with Clara, was greatly distressed on hearing a brief account of the mysterious drowning affair, and of Master Fairway's unwilling yet unwavering belief in Asa's guilt. In the workshop on the following afternoon he ven-

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tured to question Uncle Obed upon the matter, and in reply the latter calmly and sadly went through all the details of the occurrence, concluding by once more declaring his firm conviction that Asa Kentle's vessel must certainly have run down and drowned the Spurling brothers in their now famous green shay.

In vain Mr. Rowland then represented to the old man that considering the acknowledged high character of the young skipper and his crew, in the absence of any direct proof to the contrary, their solemn denial of the least knowledge whatever in regard to the affair ought to be taken as conclusive. Master Fairway only shook his head dejectedly. In his mind there was positive proof that the shay had been struck by the Good Intent, and through his own words Asa Kentle had deliberately destroyed all hope of its being an accident. Whether the matter ought not to have been laid before the authorities, was with Obed Fairway a serious question.

Although their acquaintance was so short, Rowland had already discovered that his host's reputation for being "set" in his opinions was thoroughly well deserved. Not in the least blind to Master Fairway's many lovable qualities, the minister already felt that when Uncle Obed had once fully

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made up his mind upon any matter, argument might as well be addressed to the grim old granite ledge which cropped out from the steep hillside close against the shop window.

“Look a’ here a minute, you!” Obed Fairway at length said. “I want you should be sure to git the rights of this ’ere.”

He then unlocked a heavy sea-chest having becketts of hemp spliced in each end, and from its depths drew forth a slender package. Untying this with trembling fingers, he handed to the minister a splintered piece of wood eight or ten inches in length. One side was thinly painted green; the other a peculiar salmon color.

“That billet o’ wood is what I took out of the schooner’s bob-stay,” he explained briefly. Then he threw a thick coat over his shoulders, and picking up an old broom which lay near by, opened the shop door.

“Jest you step along of me a secont or two, Elder, ef you don’t mind,” he said.

Leading the way through deep snow to the shore, with his broom he soon uncovered the flattened remains of a large lap-streak boat lying just above high-water mark.

“Now this ’ere, Elder,” he began with the air of one who performs a painful duty, “this ere’s what

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is left of them two Spurlingses' big green shay. Some on 'em down there to Thrumbcap fetched her in here for me to take and repair-up. They wanted I should repair her up and widden her out a grain too, but I says to 'em right off you might jes' soon turn to and empt your money plumb into the dock, for she's too fur gone to be widdened out or repaired-up anyways, 's I. Come to that, I would n't tetched of her on no account, no matter what shape she was in; seem 's though I could n't had the heart.

“ Here 's the garboard strakes I put into her last spring, pretty nigh all stove to flinders, you see they be now. They 're cypress wood, as I told ye, and prob'ly there ain't another cypress boat-plank inside a hundred mile of here. For the matter o' that, I can't say jest how fur you 'd have to hunt afore you 'd run afoul of a one, but you 'd be liable to do some consid'ble travelin'. Them garboards was painted one coat of green outside, — verdigrease it is, old fashioned verdigrease green, you want to take notice, and one coat of this 'ere what I call liver-color inside, so 's to match-up the rest-part of her. They never got only one coat of paint for the reason them Spurlings was in a master tease to see her fishin' again, seein' as mack'el struck off here consid'ble plenty jest then, and

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commenced to 'mash'¹ in good shape, so 's Abram Spurling he only give the new work a light priming coat to keep the water out like, for the time bein'.

"Now, Elder, jest you take notice ef that piece of wood in your hand ain't painted up the very same way; one little skimmity coat of liver-color one side of her, and a skimmity coat of verdigrease t' other side. That Spurling shay was all the boat anywheres around here to my knowin' that had a verdigrease bottom onto her. The old sir never would so much as look at none of this new-fangled git-up of copper paint, same 's all the rest-part of the boats use now'days, and seem 's though them two oldest boys of his'n run away along of the same idee, — nothin' like a good verdigrease bottom for ary boat to sail on, they allowed, and that 's where they was right, too. Now jest take and clap that piece of yourn right down atop of the other, so-fashion, — will you tell me is there the least dite of difference betwixt them two colors?

"This 'ere sliver of wood measures five eights and a sixteenth through her, and so doos them garboards into this shay, to a dot. Ef maybe you ain't much on tellin' woods by the looks, jest take and taste these shavings off'n the two; ain't they the very same taste? Cert'nly they be, for the reason

¹ Mash : to enter the nets.

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both is cypress wood, and growed on the very same stump. Now we 'll go up back inside again.

“God knows, Elder,” the old man resumed in a voice broken with emotion, — “God only knows how bad I wisht I could disbelieve this thing. I’d pay out the half what I’m wuth to-day, and that ain’t no great, jest to know I’m mistakened. Nobody can’t think how bad this has took holt of me, Elder. I set a master store by that boy, Elder Rowland, — ef he’d been my very own, and all the boy ever I had, seems’s though he could n’t been no nigher to me than what he was till he turned to and — till this ’ere happened. I suffer same’s a thole-pin ’most the whole time. I lay awake by nights mullin’ of it over, and daytimes too it’s seldom ever I can make out to heave it aside for a minute. Clarry and the woman there, nach’ally they don’t commence to take it hard as what I do. The way they look at it, they think Asy must done it unbeknownst to hisself someways or ’nother, but then they ’re nothin’ only jest women-folks, and dunno, — that’s the thing of it; they dunno. They mean right enough, but they dunno; they ain’t noways posted in regards to sich things, and I s’pose ’t ain’t anyways nach’al they should be. I jest take and leave alone of ’em pretty much altogether in regards to it, now’days. It’s seldom ever I make a

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word of talk about it to home here now, for it don't do a mite of good as I see, and jest only keeps us all nerved up wuss 'n ever. I was for a spell in hopes Clarry would take and heave Asy over, after the way I've explained the thing out to her time and time again" —

"Heave him over?" Laban Rowland managed to articulate, as a knife seemed to enter his heart. "Do you mean by that — that they are engaged?"

"Oh, Lord, yes indeed;" answered Master Fairway with a great sigh. "They been goin' together now the last three year, stiddy. Come to that, I guess nary one of 'em ever said 'boo' to nobody else sence there was any bigness to 'em at all. After what happened, I up and says to Asy I never wanted he should set foot a-near this house again, and he never once has to my knowin' till the time he helped lug you inside there a spell ago. I did set everything by that boy, and there's nothin' in God's world I would n't done for him," said Obed, wiping away a tear with the back of his hand, "but seem's ef I could n't stand and see 'em tie up together after that, nohow. I been in great hopes all along Clarry would see herself 't wa'n't no kind of fittin' thing, and would act different about it from what she has, but I guess likely she won't now; I guess she won't. She's awful set in

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her ways, Clarry is. She favors her mother I can see in looks and actions, the older she gits. Seem 's though she says to the woman here only the other day how she never commenced to think so much of Asy Kentle in all her life before as what she has sence you 've been tellin' about the way he resicued you. He 's got good grit, the boy has ; there 's no rubbin' that out, and he 'll make a boat do 'most anything unless'n it is to talk. Clarry she 's worked up now the wust way, and says to her aunt all the thing that keeps her alive is the thinkin' that Asy is bound to get cleared of this. I 've told her and told her there ain't no way to clear him now, but there ! what's the good talkin' ! Clarry 's a good clever girl as ever was, Elder, but awful set, *awful* set, and I s'pose likely she 'll do the way she wants, now. 'T won't make no real great sight of odds to me though, what she doos, for I cal'late to be called aft 'most any time now, and the sooner the better. Clarry is all the one I 'm thinkin' of. Don't be in a hurry, Elder ; keep your settin', do ! I 'm all done work for to-day. I only jest putter 'round out here now'days to kill time, like."

Laban Rowland excused himself hurriedly, and left the shop in a daze. Not heeding what direction he took, he tramped steadily through the snow up the old post-road, which led over the meeting-house

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hill and thence along the coast towards the Cape. It was now but little used, and only a single sleigh had passed towards the village since the last night's snowfall. Mechanically the minister followed the horse's hoof-prints up the narrow road between stone walls and spruce woods laden with snow, past the gray little church and into the hollow beyond. Here the sleigh tracks turned in to the barn adjoining Joel Kentle's old one-story house. His youngest girl had driven to the village with eggs to be "traded" at the store, but unmindful of the commotion caused within doors by an expected visit from the Elder, Rowland tramped abstractedly along through the thick woods towards the ocean.

Like a great deep voice calling him on, the rote soon came rumbling across the open country ahead, and the wind which blew in his face was charged with the bracing odor of kelps and the sea. He pushed on some distance farther, and then vaulting a set of moss-grown cedar bars as old as the neighboring stone walls, waded half knee deep across a short stretch of rocky pasture land to the shore.

The long dark surges of a stormy winter sea broke thunderously among the black outlying ledges, and sent swirling floods of milk-white brine hissing and seething up the steep beach of coarse shingle to wash the frozen bank of kelps and sea-

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drift on which he stood. With head bent forward the minister remained for some time absently gazing at the changeless, ever-changing rush and retreat of waters. Overhead the gulls circled and swooped, their querulous cries rising raucous above the rumbling breakers.

Clara Fairway for three years engaged to Asa Kentle! Laban Rowland could no more banish this constantly recurring thought from his mind than he could close his eyes to her sweetly alluring image. There arose before him an almost maddening vision of himself and Clara Fairway married and cosily settled down together at the Harbor; of long winter evenings spent in the blissful task of developing and directing the girl's inherent taste for music and literature; tastes which otherwise he imagined were likely to become perverted if they survived at all, but much more likely to die outright for lack of sustenance. He pictured Clara and himself joined heart and hand in the congenial labor of regenerating the backsliding little town of which she was still so fond. By no means vain or overconfident, the young minister yet flattered himself that Clara Fairway's childish infatuation for Asa Kentle would in all probability soon be a thing of the past, after he himself had once seriously taken up the business of love-making. It was very evi-

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dent that she already liked his society, and he had not failed to notice the rapt attention with which she always listened to his frequent talks on foreign lands, on music and books, and above all, to his plans for future work in Kentle's Harbor.

Off the dark mass of distant Fairway's Point the sails of several tossing craft showed ruddy in the light of the setting sun. These Laban Rowland suddenly recognized as the Kentle's Harbor trawlers returning home after their rough and cold day's work outside. At this distance they seemed to him like toy boats far off on that cheerless looking waste, yet in one of those tumbling pygmy craft, he mused, was the man who so lately saved the life of an almost total stranger at such appalling risk of his own.

And meantime, what was he, the stranger, doing in return? Claiming to be a minister of the gospel, he stood in his warm overcoat on the shore, trying desperately to be man enough not to attempt stealing the sweetheart of his absent rescuer. Beginning his pastorate in this manner, was he not in a fair way soon to be numbered among those others who had ministered at the Harbor to so little good effect?

Rowland turned, and regaining the road, once more took up his aimless wandering. Suddenly he

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wheeled in his tracks and started back with the eager stride of a man who knows exactly where he is going, and is anxious to be there. When he again reached Joel Kentle's weatherbeaten yet comfortable old house, the sleigh tracks had returned from the village, and lights burned brightly within. There was a smell of cooking in the air, and through the curtainless kitchen window the minister saw Joel Kentle's honest face for the moment illumed by the match with which he lit his pipe. Rowland went directly in, and through dint of much persuasion, at length succeeded in engaging board and lodging with the Kentles for the rest of the winter. Though opposed on general principles to all forms of deception, on this occasion the minister certainly attempted to leave the impression that his chief reason for a change was a desire to lodge nearer the meeting-house.

How to make good old Master Fairway and his family feel comfortable over so sudden a move was a much more difficult question. They had all been extremely kind to him in many different ways, and Rowland resolved that the feelings of the old man and his wife should not be hurt at all events. Accordingly he deemed it necessary to make a clean breast to them of his overpowering attachment to their niece, while at the same time he declared his

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fixed determination never to wed. Clara he could not face at the time, and so managed to avoid her entirely, trusting for the present to her uncle's promise of excusing him as best he could with talk of disturbing noise in the shop, and inconvenient distance from the church.

But the girl herself feared at first that the Rev. Laban Rowland had taken offense at the earnest way in which on a recent occasion she combated what seemed to her his unjust criticisms of certain manners and customs of the Harbor. She wrote him a pathetically humble little note on paper ruled with bright blue lines, and expressed the deepest regret at her rudeness. This note the minister promptly kissed repeatedly, and then resolutely burned in the bedizened air-tight stove of his room.

For a poor country parson, Laban Rowland was somewhat fastidious about his note-paper, of which he had a good supply on hand, but though eager to dispel Clara Fairway's fears by answering her note at once, he delayed doing so until identical stationery could be procured from Captain Ezra Futtock's grocery store in the village.

After this, Rowland sought relief of mind by working more assiduously than ever. He had agreed to remain at Kentle's Harbor a certain

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length of time, after which, if mutually agreeable, arrangements might be made for a longer stay. The meetings had been well attended, for he had spared no pains to become acquainted about the village, though thus far chiefly perhaps as a friend and neighbor, rather than as a minister. There were, it is true, more present the first Sunday than at any time since, but the meeting-house had been closed for months, and many no doubt came at first from sheer tedium, and a curiosity to have at least one look at the new preacher Captain Jasper Sheave was known to have enticed from that cultured region rather indefinitely described as "in back o' Boston, somewheres."

Rowland noticed Skipper Asa and others of his crew quite regularly present, but with Asa especially he had scarcely been able to get a word since the day they landed. It had seemed to him that the young skipper avoided a meeting, and since recent developments he was convinced that this was the case, and thought he understood the reason.

Thus far, Mr. Rowland had been generally chary of criticism in his remarks, both at church and elsewhere. The longer he stayed, the more he saw in the place to excite astonishment and indignation. Day by day he became more assured that here indeed was a field for labor such as he never dreamed

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existed in a New England town peopled almost exclusively by the purest Yankee stock. But the new minister wished to know his ground thoroughly before proposing any radical changes in the order of things. He had a natural dread of going off at half-cock, and so for some time contented himself with making copious notes for future use.

At the conclusion of his talk on the first Sunday evening after his change of lodgings, however, he thought it well to enter a remonstrance against certain very objectionable latter day features of worship at the Harbor. The very audible munching of cornballs and peanuts by otherwise noisy young men in the rear of the church, and the incessant spitting of tobacco juice in pews throughout the sanctuary, were habits he plainly declared, with which he was heretofore unfamiliar, and against which he acknowledged a strong prejudice. Then expressing a fervent wish that in the future they might be dispensed with, he pronounced the benediction.

But it must not for a moment be supposed that the sensitive, high-strung natures of the young men principally referred to could brook so deliberate an insult. Among those present on this particular Sabbath evening was L. Merle Sheave, eldest son of Captain Jasper Sheave, the richest man in the

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vicinity and at present posing as a pillar of the church. In personal appearance L. Merle resembled his father to a marked degree. He had the invariable flop ears of the family, though with him they certainly had taken an extra twist outward, till thoughtless companions sometimes derisively accused him of being "wung-out," a distinctively nautical term of reproach having reference to the two sails of a schooner in the position known as "wing-and-wing," or "winged-out." Like numbers of his intimates, he had never attended school six months in his life, and if he was able to read or write, most certainly never did either. In the Sheave family L. Merle was called "Lemmy," but since Bible names were now wholly obsolete, and even good old English ones in small favor at the Harbor, the young man had some time since adopted the favorite name of Merle. Who or what Merle was, no one knew or cared, but as the day of Johns and Richards and of Marys and Lucys waned, so the reign of the Merles and the Perles, of Maes and Maudes and Inezes, began, and waxed steadily in strength, and great was the popularity thereof in the ancient town of Kentle's Harbor.

L. Merle Sheave, then, was much in evidence this evening, with face somewhat flushed by liberal pulls at the rum-flask which frequently circulated just

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previous to evening service. Notwithstanding much urging from his father, the young man had as yet made practically no attempt at advances into the good graces of Clara Fairway since the Captain's long interview with her uncle, and it now suddenly dawned upon him that here at last was an opportunity for ingratiating himself in her favor.

In speaking recently to an acquaintance concerning the Elder's change of boarding-place, Clara Fairway had mentioned her late somewhat warm discussion with him, and expressed a fear that he might be offended. Gossip, always so rife in the village, immediately converted her casual words into a sensational story that Elder Rowland had described the people of Kentle's Harbor as "ignoranter than ever he drempt of;" that "then Clarry Fairway she got right up on her ear and stumped him to prove it, she did;" and further that as the result of a serious quarrel in consequence the Elder was ordered to quit the house bag and baggage.

In the course of much half-whispered conversation constantly carried on in the rear of the church during service, the above story came to the receptive ears of L. Merle Sheave this evening, and in connection with Mr. Rowland's closing remarks at once suggested a line of action.

Merle Sheave immediately announced his fixed

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determination of lickin' the Elder at once within an inch of his life, and thus avenging at one fell swoop the latter's affront to Clara Fairway and also the evening's unpardonable slurs upon the community. Having enlisted the help of three equally pugnacious companions, all four divested of coats, and with shirt-sleeves rolled up, lay in ambush for the Elder in a thick growth of alders by the roadside as he returned home that evening.

Now fortunately, perhaps, among other expedients resorted to in the attempt at earning means for an education, Laban Rowland had served for some little time with much credit on the police force of a large Western city. Though it seems incredible that he should at that time have foreseen a call to labor in the vineyard at Kentle's Harbor, yet had this been the case, he could in nowise have fitted himself to more purpose for the strenuous life of his present incumbency.

As an officer, Elder Rowland had won no small renown upon his beat for his masterly manner of running in hoodlums, and the four young men whom tippling had deluded into anticipating a veritable picnic in the proposed meeting with their pastor were somewhat discomfited at the outset by the unconcerned manner in which he received their first volley of threats and profanity. Far from recanting,

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or even showing the least apprehension of the impending thrashing, the Rev. Mr. Rowland as it were for the moment wholly cast aside his priestly robes, and addressing his young parishioners in the terse phrases of an unmistakable layman, assured them that unless they forthwith hied from his presence with the utmost dispatch, he would then and there proceed to wipe up the ground with their persons.

In the minister's defense it may be said that probably he was not feeling in the best of humor at this time. Things had not been coming his way to any marked extent of late, and perhaps from various other causes too, he was a little irritable, or doubtless he would have expressed himself with more decorum.

The four champions delivered themselves of more profanity, and showed signs of closing in. Suddenly L. Merle Sheave and the man next him found themselves revolving rapidly among last summer's brown burdocks in the snow by the wayside ; seeing which the two remaining would-be defenders of the Harbor's fair name made a quick break for their clothes, and fled down the road precipitately.

X

THE STRANDING OF THE SERAPH

FROM the time when snow was first reported as "giving up in the eye of the sun" at noon-day, to its final disappearance in the sprouting grass of April or May, was indeed commonly a far cry at Kentle's Harbor. This year, however, the middle of March brought certain unmistakable signs of an early spring. On the sheltered sides of the old fish-houses upon the wharves groups of boys began trying for the first mess of flounders, and in shoal water over the flats at the head of the cove the lobster catchers were again to be seen seeking bait with their long plaice-spears.

Very sparingly interspersed between snow, rain, and sleet, fierce northwest gales with zero weather, long drags of piercing easterlies, and like accompaniments of gentle spring on the New England coast, there now came days when the warm sun of noon-time drew forth trickling rivulets from beneath the solid snow-banks which still lay packed high against the stone walls along the road. People living a short distance inland brought word to

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the village stores that frost was leaving the ground in certain well sheltered spots, and with the coming of pussy-willows the inhabitants of the Harbor prepared for that long period of wallowing and slumping in mire described by them with rare moderation as “consid’ble pore goin’.”

As yet the season was not so far advanced as to warrant removing from the houses the winter banking-up of kelp and eel-grass, — that old-time defense against the cold still largely adhered to in the vicinity. Some few weeks later on, very commonly by way of inducing adequate appetite for attacking the usual soporific spread of Fast Day, throughout the Harbor citizens might be seen busily at work with barrows wheeling steaming loads of this half putrid matter to the highway in front of their houses.

This necessary task accomplished, on the same opportune holiday many premises are likely to receive a much needed “fixin’ up” after the long winter season. From all the soggy back yards, musty cellars, and noisome corners of the village are now raked up, dug out, and scraped together the decayed vegetables, dead leaves, and ashes ; the accumulated fish-heads, clam-shells, and beef-bones ; the broken crockery and lamp chimneys ; in short, in a temporary ebullition of neatness induced by

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the gladsome spring-time, all the litter of the preceding winter locally known under the comprehensive terms of "krawm" and "sculch" is collected and transported to the public highway. Under these conditions it is perhaps needless to say that the pastime of bicycling was regarded with scant favor in the town of Kentle's Harbor.

At present, in front of Captain Abner Grommet's sail-loft the devious thoroughfare bid fair to soon reach that degree of liquidity regularly looked for as marking the height of the season, and though there already seemed no lack of moisture for keeping the narrow road in its usual vernal condition, certain oracles of the Harbor now predicted a heavy rainstorm.

According to a dictum of much-traveled Captain Grommet, the curiously unreasonable inhabitants of Cape Cod used, and to the best of his knowledge and belief do still continue, to class all days upon which the sun does not shine clearly as "stormy," while all bright, sunny days are invariable denounced as nothing more nor less than so many "weather-breeders." Be that as it may, the weather-wise frequenters of the sail-loft had incessantly cocked their eyes at the bright skies of the past few mild days, and unanimously agreed that the weather clerk undoubtedly held something up his sleeve.

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And sure enough, after some hours of very obvious preparation, at the last a furious southeast rain-storm set in, whereby the "goin'" was not only rendered several shades more desperate, but the waters of the cove were dyed brown with washings from the town's scanty soil.

Captain Grommet's warm loft by the shore had been filled with its usual stormy day frequenters since morning. In the afternoon Captain Jasper Sheave became tired of pacing the floor of his lately somewhat lonesome emporium, and also sought company in the sail-loft. Here with Captain Tobias Canthook, a kindred spirit and deacon of the Harbor church, he sat within easy expectorating range of the huge stove which hung suspended from the ceiling, and discussed certain very objectionable points already developed by the new minister.

In Kentle's Harbor the number of captains corresponded with surprising closeness to the list of legal voters tacked upon the much-placarded walls of the village post-office. From the very few remaining old "square-riggers" who had circumnavigated the globe, down to half-grown, cigarette-sucking youths in yachting caps who lured confiding boarders into flimsy sailboats during the summer months, practically the whole male population of

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the place now answered joyfully to the title of "Cap'n."

In his new suit of yellow oilskins the Rev. Laban Rowland braved the pelting storm this dark afternoon in order to visit the post-office, and on his return stopped at the sail-loft for a short chat, as he had done several times before.

The light being poor for his work, Abner Grommet had pulled his well-worn bench close to a rear window overlooking the harbor. From this window soon after the minister's arrival he suddenly spied a strange incoming vessel.

"Here comes a feller in, all tied down to nothin'!" he cried. "One, two, yes, three reefed foresail is all ever she'll suffer to! Look how she bungs up¹ to it, will ye! Lord, you! but she's had it hubbly and peek-ed enough out there to-day, and no mistake! I bate skipper is some tickled to find a hole in the beach to-night, and not to blame, neither!"

A scramble for the two rear windows of the loft at once took place. The vessel turned out to be a small eastern coaster with a high deck-load of lumber. She was running nearly before the gale directly into the harbor, under close-reefed foresail alone. Her mainboom was hopelessly broken, and

¹ Rolls.

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the jib-halliards having parted, the sail had run down the stay and dragged under the bow.

In she sped, now wildly driving ahead on the crest of a sea, and now settling her hull nearly from sight in the hollows, to be again hurled forward with stern high in air. On getting farther in, however, the force of the sea was greatly broken by a low rocky point projecting from the western shore, and here it was evident the vessel's master had decided to attempt anchoring, though one familiar with the harbor could have found much better shelter elsewhere. The helm was put down, and the little schooner made a feeble effort at coming to, while her crew of only two men could be seen struggling to lower the foresail; but the howling gale now partly filled the disabled jib, and so paid her head off again.

“Why, you! The poor devil is all disenabled and crippled-up the wust way, ain't he, though!” cried 'Lijah Trunnel. “Prob'ly he's been gurgin' of it¹ to that plague-gone little packet scand'lous to-day, in hopes to make afore dark, but seems's though he's had more'n what he could stivver under! Take and keep her off, neighbor! Keep her off a dite more! Let her quilt in² a piece further on that western shore afore you try

¹ Carrying sail.

² Go.

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to club¹ her, ef you know when you're well off!"

Numerous other expert opinions as to what should have been, and what should now be done were then freely offered by those crowding the windows of the warm sail-loft. For choosing an anchorage so exposed to the prevailing wind, the skipper was by many contemptuously cursed as a condemned agriculturalist richly deserving the loss of his vessel to the last timber-head. All agreed that unless the man got his anchors down now very quickly, and succeeded in checking the craft without parting the cables, there would be trouble and plenty of it at short order. The next instant the plunge of an anchor from the vessel's bow was seen.

"There goes his best bower!" cried Captain Sheave, who, like his friend Canthook, had elbowed himself into a good position at one of the windows.

"Yes, sir-ee," said Deacon Canthook, "and he stands a plaguey good show to lose her too, unless he's consid'ble tender about how he snubs her up! Them look to be shingles on deck, Jasper, and I would n't wonder a mite but what we seen 'em piled up here on the beach in win'rows afore it's dark un'neath the table to-night! This wind breezens

¹ Anchor.

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on every minute stiddy now, and 't ain't high-water for nigh an hour's time yit, neither. I cal'late this breeze will prick on ¹ heftier right along till then, anyways."

Then noticing suddenly that Mr. Rowland had approached quite near to them, the Deacon added louder in his whining voice, "My soul, but what a cryin' shame 't would be ef only she should part, and come in here broad-sideways right atop of them great peak-ed rocks, you!" And, wrought upon by such a distressing picture of disaster, Deacon Tobias Canthook gave his neighbor a vigorous nudge with his elbow.

But though Jasper Sheave then assented, and even loudly expressed himself as greatly disturbed in mind over the probability of any such deplorable happening, every man of his hearers knew well that in all Kentle's Harbor no two persons could be found inwardly more elated over the prospect of another wreck and its sweet possibilities of profit than this same pair of well-to-do citizens.

Meanwhile the two men on board the little schooner were hastily paying out chain in the endeavor to stop her progress shoreward. Half-way between them and the mainland lay a small unmarked ledge known as the "Fiddler's Pup,"

¹ Increase.

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towards which the craft was rapidly drifting nearly broadside on, when suddenly her bow swung quickly into the wind.

“He’s got her now, set-fire ef he ain’t!” Captain Sheave exclaimed. “No, he hain’t, though; there she falls off again in proper good shape! She’s parted the chain, sure’s ever you’re borned! Now take and give her the other mud-hook, you pore half-fool, you, or you’ll pile up on the ‘Pup,’ and no place else!”

Splash! rattle! went the second anchor, and this time the chain held. The vessel swung again head to wind and sea, but uncomfortably near the sunken ledge, over which the seas cockled darkly from time to time, as if about to break.

Several of those in the sail-loft, who were well provided with oilskins, now flocked to the shore, where, huddled together under the lea of an ancient salt-house, they better watched the vessel. But Captain Sheave and Deacon Canthook remained steadily fixed at their back window, glaring through its grimy little panes with a wolfish gleam in their eyes, and bitterly complaining of the driving torrents of rain which so obscured their view. In dark relief against the lowery sky stood the two spellbound figures; one bull-necked and short, the other tall, lank, and bent; both old men with more

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than comfortable properties, and lately most prominent in church affairs at the Harbor, yet both now devoutly hoping for one more opportunity of profiting through the grievous misfortune of storm-driven mariners. Consumed as they both were with avarice, these two fathers of the town fairly trembled with excitement as they strained their watery eyes at the plunging little coaster from the streaming windows of the loft.

It was now drawing near high-water, the time when, according to a prevalent belief, a southeaster may be counted upon to blow its hardest. All conditions seemed absolutely favorable for disaster. An already disabled vessel, short-handed, and loaded high with lumber on deck, was hanging on in an exposed position by the bitter end of her only remaining chain cable. If that should part as the other just had, it seemed that nothing short of a miracle could prevent her striking the sunken ledge just astern, or coming ashore on the jagged rocks almost at their feet.

“Oh, dear, dear, my soul, you! but it’s a ter’ble sight to stand by and see prop’ty resked that way!” exclaimed Deacon Canthook, giving a side-long glance at the minister, while his lantern jaws constantly worked with a hound-like expectancy. “There must be an onrighteous strain on that

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chain when she sets back on it same's she doos! Ef that anchor of hern ever gives up the least dite now, I cal'late she 'd take on the 'Pup' good and solid, — hey, Jasper? There can't be only a scurse fathom and a half o' water onto it; though, come to think, this 'ere is an extry high run of tides jest about now."

"Yes, I know well the tide is puttin' up¹ all this week on the full o' the moon," Captain Sheave admitted, "but then that craft is scand'lous deep loaded. She's a-near scuppers to,² that packet is, and it's rough as a grater out there, Canthook. It's seldom ever you'll see it any peek-eder in this cove than what it is to-night. Look at how it cockles on the 'Pup' by spells, will ye; — why, it comes within one of breakin' a clear torch on that laidge already! When that vessel falls off'n one of them big seas that way, there ain't any too much water un'neath of her keel right where she lays to now! 'Tain't anyways bold-to³ 'round about that side of the rock, Canthook. You'll find the water shoalens up awful quick to the s'uth'ard of the 'Pup,' for I've speared me a mess o' plaice out there at half-tide, when 't was good and mod'rate. That vessel is goin' to fetch up on the laidge all

¹ Increasing.

² Loaded, scuppers to the water.

³ Deep.

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solid enough, unless'n this heavy out-wind¹ shoves in the tide out of all reason to-night."

"My soul, but that's jest the thing of it, you!" Deacon Canthook said, a bit anxiously. "It doos blow now right out endways from plumb s'uth-east, nigh's you can set it, and it's breezenin' on all the time at that. I seen a s'utheaster make three foot difference in a run o' tides to this Harbor!"

"Oh, I know all that well enough, too," said Jasper Sheave. "I know she blows a livin' gale o' wind already, and I would n't wonder no great ef we did n't git a reg'lar-built, old-fashioned brush out of this afore ever she lets go, but still you don't want to forgit that a scant fathom and a half is the best water you'll find on the 'Pup,' — that is, take it any common dreen o' tides. Why, set-fire, you!" he added cheerfully, "the time old Cap'n Knighthead went to work and plunked the Centurion right atop of that very same laidge, — you rec'lect the time, don't ye? — Thick-a-fog; thick as burgoo, 't was, — he wa'n't drawrin' only ten foot of water chock aft, but I took notice she stopped and died right there, for all that old creatur' was timbered-out stout as ary seventy-four gun frigate! Godfrey mighty! I guess I ain't

¹ A wind from the eastern board.

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noways liable to forgit that scrape in a hurry, for I never made me only a grain risin' of a hundred out of it, when, ef only I 'd knowed what I learnt afore night, I might jes' soon had me double and thribble the money as not!"

Here the Deacon's sharp elbow was again brought to play against Captain Sheave's side with such energy that he winced visibly.

"Double and thribble be jiggered!" broke in bluff old 'Lijah Trunnel, who stood close by. "You 'd had the togs stripped off'n the man's back that time, without he 'd turned and drawed a pistol on ye, same 's he done! Blow my shirt! but I s'pose ef only the honest truth was known, the pair of ye are hopin' to God this minute that plague-gone little packet out here will bilge afore sundown now, so 's you 'll git your reg'lar pickin's out of her!"

"You 'd a sight better take and pay folks what you owe 'em, in room of going to work a-heavin' slurs, and sayin'-over!" Captain Sheave retorted.

"I don't owe *you* nothin', anyways; you got no collar onto *me*!" rejoined 'Lijah Trunnel hotly. "It's about time somebody 'round here said-over to ye, I'm thinkin'!" he said with a quick look towards the minister. "I've seen wracks to this Harbor afore this, you rec'lect. This one ain't the fust little vessel to stub her toe 'round here, not by

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a jugful! Go it, though! Maybe you'll git your come-uppance some fine day yit. Life's nothin' only so much comic misery, anyways!"

"That 'ere schooner is commencin' to kaidge in¹ a grain, sure's ever you live!" at this moment declared Captain Sheave, quite ready to change the drift of conversation. "I took a range onto her jest now, and the chimbly of the Larkin house over acrost there come jest be-aft the mainmast; now she's nigh abreast the fore-riggin'! Yes, sir-ee, sir! That vessel is kaidgin' to loo'ard every secont now, and no rubbin' of it out!"

"My soul, but jest let me git a good look right there where you be!" cried Deacon Canthook, frantically wiping the glass with his coat-sleeve. "This is all the place I can see to wuth a cent. Bedide, you, but she doos look to be in nigher, that's a fact! Dear, dear, my soul and body! It's 'most too bad to see prop'ty hove to destruction that way, and no knowin' ef it's insured on, neither! Oh, 't is dretful, dretful! Take and sight her again now, Jasper; your eyes is full better'n mine;— watch her sharp now, and see ef the creatur' don't hoss ahead any, like. Sure you ain't mistakened?"

"No, no!" Jasper Sheave replied, a grin of delight overspreading his flushed face in spite of him-

¹ To drag.

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self. "No mistake about it. She's all adrift again! She's walkin' astern a good stick now at every sea, in great shape! Awful pity, swan to man ef 't ain't! How many thousand o' shingles do you cal'late that hooker will lug on deck, jest for a guess?"

"Oh, I can't say, this fur off," answered the Deacon. "Nigh's ever I can tell, she has the look of a consid'ble burdensome little creatur' for her bigness. Maybe I'd give her somewheres 'round three hundred thousand on deck, but jes' like 's not she's got dimension-stuff aboard too, and a hold full of dry pine lumber, for all you can tell. My soul, but ain't it a weeked sight to see prop'ty hove to destruction so-fashion! Who knows but what it's liable to ruinate the owners complete, without she's insured on chock to the handle! There she starts again, lively! My soul, Jasper, but I can see her kaidge astern on every sea now, plain 's can be! Hi, yi! There comes a master great over-growed sea now; — guess that one'll make out to fetch her! She'll give her chain bungo when she sets back atop o' that feller! Take that one right square slap in the face, you plaguey little jade, you! What? You won't give up nohow? Torment ye, take and hang holt a spell longer ef you want; you're spoke for to-night, anyways! Wisht to gracious we only knowed for sure whether that's all the anchor

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they've got left aboard or not. What the mischief are them two doin' of forrard there now? Not givin' of her more chain, be they, think?"

"Chain, no! Not much they hain't!" cried Captain Jasper, scarcely able to keep both feet on the floor. "They ain't got ary fathom of chain left to give her; I cal'late she's ridin' to the batt's-end¹ of her chain a'ready! Maybe they are in some hopes to slip cable and run in here on the flats to the east'ard, — that's all the squeak I see for 'em now, bein' as they can't hold her to anchor, but I misdoubt ef they make out to come that little game neither, for she's too much disenabled to claw to wind'ard so fur. That packet is spoke for dead sure, unless'n this wind should take and backen in to the nor'ard, or them dev'lish Life Savin' folks spots her, and come rowin' acrost here hell-bent in their boat, a-shovin' in their noses same's they always cal'late on!"

At mention of the Life Saving crew, Deacon Canthook turned from the window for a brief moment. His jaw fell, and he stared at the other with a look of actual dismay. "My soul, you!" he exclaimed in a low tone, "You don't believe them devils can make out to see clean across there to-night all thick-a-rain the way it is, do ye, though?"

¹ Very end.

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I would n't believe they could hold ary boat up to this breeze, anyways!"

"I dunno as they can, and I dunno but they can," replied the Captain. "I always take fine notice though, it's seldom ever we do git so much as a stick of driftwood ashore to this Harbor now'days, without they rig up some ways or 'nother to beat us out of it clip and clean. I call it jest fairly scand'lous the way they worked it the last two wracks ever we had. You might say every time we do git a one anywheres 'round here now'days, the way them devils play it on us is nothin' in the world only jest steppin' right in and jerkin' the bread plumb out of folkses' mouths!"

"Torment their dirty pelts, I know it is!" Deacon Canthook whined, once more hastily rubbing the blurred window with his sleeve. "The way I look at it, you come to take reg'lar-built out-and-out pirates, and they're full better everyways than that plaguey troop of robbers over acrost there to that Station. That's what folks gits by them tormented Civic Service laws, and it jest shows good and plain what we're comin' to. But look at her fall off now, will ye! She's struck adrift all clear this time, sure enough!"

"Set-fire, yes! There she goes for good!" shrieked Captain Jasper in a frenzy of excitement.

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“Let’s we git down out of this, rain or no rain!”

Narrowly escaping a fall on the loft’s slippery floor, both old men stumbled pell mell with the others down the dark stairway out into the driving storm.

XI

THE VULTURES AT WORK

WITH most of the others in the loft, Laban Rowland rushed to the shore. The schooner had then brought up on the "Fiddler's Pup," where she remained hard and fast. Rowland's first impulse was to attempt boarding her, but all to whom he appealed declared it impossible to pull a boat against the gale, which was undoubtedly increasing in fury steadily.

He inquired for Asa Kentle, and learned that the Good Intent had again gone to the Cape with a large trip of fish, so no help could be looked for from that quarter. Captain 'Lijah Trunnel, however, seemed quite positive that while the stranded schooner was certainly in a bad scrape, her two men would no doubt be able to make a landing in their own boat. The distance was short, and once clear of the schooner, even should the small boat be swamped, she was bound to come ashore before the gale at short order.

"You see, Elder, 't ain't anyways nigh so rough and chowy where that vessel lays as what it is out-

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side the range of the point," Captain Trunnel said reassuringly. "They 'll make out to cast loose their dinky all right, unless'n they 're complete farmers, and ef they 're nothin' only a pair of plague-gone cow-yard tars, let 'em jest mitten onto a bunch of shingles apiece, and this 'ere breeze o' wind will show 'em the nighest way to the turf pretty quick! You ain't need go to stewin' over them two, Elder, for they ain't in no great resk of life, and cherries 'll soon be ripe, now let me tell ye!"

At this moment Master Fairway appeared in sight a short distance down the road, with some difficulty corkscrewing his way against the storm towards them.

"'Lijah," he panted on reaching the partially sheltered spot where they stood. "Why in tunket had n't you signalized the way we talked of? Don't you cal'late there's like to be need of it, or what is it ails ye?"

"Signalize! What's the good signalizin' when it's thick-a-fog and rain as ma'sh mud? It's much as ever you can sight the sticks of the old 'Liz from here, even, — hullo, you! Why there's colors flyin' there a'ready! You been aboard o' me, have ye?"

"For sure I have!" Master Fairway replied. "I misdoubted ef you wa'n't down the road here

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some place, and so I jest took my own colors over aboard of ye, and bent 'em on. I don't cal'late to be ketched nappin' this time! This signalizin'," he added in explanation to the minister, "is so 's to fetch acrost the crew from the Station. It's kind of a put-up job betwixt us so 's to toll 'em over when they 're like to be wanted. I know it's dungeon thick outside there now, but you can't never tell what minute it may take a notion to scale-up a grain. Take a s'utheaster, and 't ain't onnach'al to look for more or less of a sundown-glinn,¹ so 's they might be able to git a sight acrost for a secont or two."

"You 'll git no sundown-glinn to-night, now you tell your folks!" said 'Lijah decidedly. "This plague-gone s'utheaster ain't ready to let go jest yit-a-while; when she doos, she 'll most likely give up all to once, same 's they generally will, but my predicament is this breeze o' wind ain't blowed out yit."

"Here they come, men! They 're leaving her!" cried the minister, who had never ceased watching the stranded vessel.

The skipper and his solitary man, after securing a few effects, had fortunately succeeded in taking to their yawl-boat without serious mishap, when,

¹ A lightening up close to the horizon.

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driven like a bubble before the furious wind, they soon reached shore, and were assisted in landing by Mr. Rowland and others. A dozen men at once dragged the heavy yawl to a safe position high among the rocks, Captain Sheave remarking meanwhile to his companion that she was "nigh a brand spangin' new boat, and never cost a cent less than seventy-five dollars to build." The two men of the schooner were soaked to the skin, and nearly exhausted by labor and previous exposure. On being promptly informed that no tow-boat was within reach either by "telegraft" or "teleform," they inquired where shelter could be had for the night. There was no public house in the place, and it was evident that the wet and hungry crew of a little coaster were not regarded as desirable boarders at the private houses where strangers commonly lodged.

On the other hand, Master Fairway and the minister were most urgent in their offers of hospitality, and kind-hearted old Captain 'Lijah Trunel, too, plainly saw in these nearly spent brother mariners fit subjects for his well-known remedy, the "Great Universalis' Pacific," generous doses of which most remarkable cure-all he was only too delighted to dispense on all possible occasions. Uncle Obed soon took the young skipper of the schooner under his protection, while the other man

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started with Captain Trunnel for the warm cabin of the old 'Liz, being solaced on the way by an oft-repeated account of a famous cure once effected by the "Universalis' Pacific" on his vessel in a certain harbor farther east.

It was then fast growing dark, and the crowd soon began to thin out somewhat, though not without wistful looks at the schooner on the part of many, and much discussion as to the chance of reaching her with a dory. Captain Jasper Sheave and his friend the Deacon were among those who felt that the occasion still required their presence, and so remained.

By this time the sharp fangs of the "Fiddler's Pup" had taken effect upon the vessel, and in consequence she was gradually settling by the head. Before it was absolutely dark those still keeping vigil on the shore were rewarded by discovering several bunches of shingles which had washed loose from the deck-load. Bidding defiance alike to rheumatics and chills, half knee deep in the icy water the two old men then splashed to and fro upon the rocky shore, and not until Deacon Canthook had stumbled over a mass of kelp and fallen flat on his face in the seething brine did they desist from their desperate attempt at saving property from destruction. Even then, with the laudable design of placing the

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recovered goods as far as possible beyond all reach of further danger, each shouldered a bunch of the wet shingles and staggered homewards.

“ ’Bout what o’clock d’ ye cal’late to git ’round in the mornin’, Jasper ? ” the Deacon asked with a fine air of indifference as they parted.

“ Oh, wall,” Captain Sheave answered carelessly, “ there ain’t no good showin’ up till after breakfast-time, is they, think ? Guess likely that hooker is planted now where we’ll know where to find her ’most any time ! ”

Having in mind this little parting conversation, and taking into due account their long intimacy with each other, on reaching home both captains immediately proceeded to their bedrooms and set their alarm-clocks, — the Deacon fixing upon four A. M. as allowing a tolerably safe margin, while Captain Sheave in consideration of the unusually promising outlook, deemed it in the nature of a shrewd move to be roused at the unseemly hour of two in the morning.

But the weather held in store a surprise for the good people of Kentle’s Harbor on the following dawn. Captain Sheave’s alarm-clock most provokingly failed to work at the critical hour, and when he awoke it was long past the appointed time. He rose hurriedly from bed, and aching with rheuma-

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tism in every joint, hobbled stiffly to the window for a look at the weather. The gilded vane on his adjoining barn pointed steadily to the northwest. Over the water and lowlands lay a dense white fog, but here and there in the pale sky overhead stars twinkled faintly, and the dull rote of the sea boomed from the western board; an undoubted sign of fairing weather.

Pulling on his clothes with harrowing thoughts of the precious time lost since this unlooked-for change in conditions, he was in some measure soothed by finding no one in sight on the muddy road leading to the shore. On reaching a point, however, where a near view of the harbor was had, what was his astonishment and chagrin at seeing the vessel, not stuck fast upon the Fiddler's Pup, or even stranded upon the rocks of the neighboring main, but instead lying quietly *afloat* near the wharf behind Ezra Futtock's store, with dim figures moving about on her high deck-load.

Visions of the hated Life Saving crew and their previous heinous attempts at wresting hard-earned property from the hands of toiling citizens filled the mind of Captain Jasper Sheave, as, puffing for breath, he sucked one boot after the other from the quaking mud, and savagely gnawed a chew from his black plug of tobacco.

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But the case, though bad enough, proved a shade less exasperating than he feared. Deacon Canthook was nowhere to be seen, and owing to the fog the crew of the distant Station were as yet unaware of the situation, but two men were in full possession of the craft when Captain Sheave reached the wharf, on which many others had already gathered. Inquiry at once brought out the disturbing fact that those on board were well-known residents of the "Lower Cove," a section of the Harbor which, having many years before presumed to secede from the mother church and establish a small meeting-house of its own, had thereby given rise to a mutual enmity, bidding fair to last through all time. That "Lower Covers" should thus venture to encroach upon the preserve of the Harbor proper, and score in this mysterious manner, was the occasion of much angry comment on the wharf as the Captain arrived. But on learning their names, he at once reflected that both were in his debt to a considerable amount, and so took heart again.

Briefly, the explanation of the matter was as follows. "Captain" Luke Grommet, a lobster-catcher living something over half a mile distant on the Lower Cove road, had learned of the mishap on the evening before. During the first half of the night he had been kept up by the sickness of his

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cow, and soon after midnight noticed that the storm had ceased entirely. He then considered it advisable to walk over to the scene of disaster at the Harbor, and see if perchance property had not drifted ashore from the stranded vessel, and thus be lying exposed to the immoral persons who, he well knew, largely formed that portion of the community.

In the event of discovering goods of whatever nature lying exposed as above mentioned, it was Captain Luke's firm intention to remove as many as possible to a place of security in his own cellar or haymow. On reaching the shore, he was intensely surprised at finding the schooner floating about midway between the ledge and mainland ; she having tipped down by the head as the tide ebbed till the angle became so great that, no doubt aided by the action of the sea, she slid from the kelp-covered rock, and being lumber-laden, floated, though somewhat water-logged.

Captain Luke took in the situation at a glance. He rushed home across the sodden fields, and, rousing his brother Ivory, pulled hastily back in a dory with as little noise as possible, and boarded the vessel before her position had been discovered by others. It was then absolutely calm, and the flood tide had drifted her in till the keel stuck in

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the soft mud but a short distance from shore. A line was at once run to the nearest wharf, and as fast as the slowly rising tide permitted, they jubilantly warped her in, feeling much in the mood for joining the universal crowing of cocks then taking place throughout the village.

Indeed, Luke Grommet's solicitude in regard to possible flotsam from the vessel's cargo now seemed likely to reap its reward. The schooner had apparently been abandoned, and he had picked her up adrift; facts clearly entitling him to a salvage claim, though just how great a claim might be made under the circumstances he would have given a month's earnings to know.

Meanwhile Captain Jasper Sheave, realizing that he was unfortunately balked of any direct profit on this occasion, resolved on making the most of a bad business, and hoped by a vigorous espousal of his debtor's cause to be the gainer in the end, and so avoid the taunts of certain acquaintances on having acquired nothing at the golden opportunity of a wrecked or disabled vessel. Putting off in a dory, he was soon alongside the schooner.

"Wall, wall, brother Grommet!" he called with ill-assumed heartiness, "I cal'late this must be one of your lucky days! You got a proper good style o' shingle there, set-fire ef you hain't, now! What

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do you call them for a shingle, brother Grommet; 'Clears' or 'Extrys,' or a grain better yit, be they?"

"I ain't took notice very particular yit jest what they be," Luke Grommet replied in no very cordial manner.

"By fire, you!" cried the Captain, laboriously pulling himself on board. "This here is a master great jag of lumber for a craft of this bigness, and no two ways about it! Why, she's the biggest little vessel ever I set foot on! She looks to be kep' up in pretty fair shape, too. I took notice jest now her seams is smooth as a baby's cheek, and I must say she's got as pretty a pair of sticks there as ever I seen into ary little vessel yit. You've went and struck it rich this time, Lukey, and I'm sure I'm real glad for ye, now that's a fact. Hullo, though! Where's your runnin' riggin' every mite gone to? Hain't been to work and onrove every blessed halliard aboard a'ready, have ye?"

"Onrove nothin'! We ain't had time to tetch of a halliard nor nothin' else! Somebody has been aboard strippin' of her afore ever we come a-nigh her!" Luke Grommet declared, with an air of great indignation. "It's much as ever I could piecen out line enough to run to the w'arft, there! They've lugged off a big lot of shingles from

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abreast the main-riggin', and there's lime, too, been stole off'n her, for see, here 't is all over everything under foot. I would n't wonder and there was a whole tier of lime-kags stowed right here beaft the mainmast, from the looks. It's a dretful shame the way she's been cleaned out below there, too. The stove's a goner, and the flour barrel's busted open, and fur's ever I could see in a hurry, what little they left wa'n't wuth the luggin' off!"

"Git out! You don't tell!" cried Captain Sheave. "That's too plaguey bad, and no mistake! Seems's though there was folks somewheres 'round here jest smart enough to turn out afore ever you did this mornin', and cut in to wind'ard of ye, like! A man ain't goin' to take his comfort and lay back to home at this day o' the world, and think he's going to git anything much out of wrackin'; that is, not 'round here he ain't. There's too many lookin' for jest them chances. But there, Cap'n, you hain't need feel bad, as I see. You've ketched onto a proper good thing this time, now there's no good talkin'! You'll be apt to git a reg'lar little gold-mind out of this, Lukey, unless'n you should take and make a bad move right at the very fust start, and heave away your chances same's I've knowed folks doin' of. The skipper, he's coming right off aboard of ye quick's ever he

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can git holt of a boat. I jest barely made out to give him the slip, but thinks I, 't won't do no hurt for me to run out and have a word or two along of ye myself fust, bein' as I've had consid'ble truck in the wrackin' line afore now. Let me jest make free to give ye a p'int or so in regards to this thing, Lukey, for I'm older 'n what you be. Don't you allow that pore, mis'ble, little runt of a skipper to set foot aboard of ye on no account; on *no* account, mind ye, noways he'll try to work it. Ef he once makes out to plank foot aboard, — set-fire, though! but here he comes a'ready, along of old man Trunnel, and a whole boatload of 'em. Dinged ef there ain't that plaguey Elder goin' to shove his oar in, too!" Here Captain Sheave lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper. "Now look out for the skipper sharp, Luke! Don't you let him make his boat fast to ye alongside, — don't leave him so much as tetch finger to the rail, for ef you once give them kind of folks an inch, they're liable to grab an ell afore ever you know it! Don't take no chances in this 'ere, for you best be sure, in room o' bein' sorry!"

"Well, gents," spoke up the boyish-looking master of the schooner, coming alongside, painter in hand, ready to make fast. "It seems 's though the old Seraph's time had n't come just yit-a-while, though I guess if" —

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"Hold still a secont, you there!" Luke Grommet broke in. "Don't tetch of this packet, Mister! Don't come no nigher to us than what you be!"

"Don't what?" the skipper exclaimed in surprise.

"Tell the bloody little pirate you'll fetch him a good jab with the pike-pole unless'n he sheers off'n us quick!" muttered Captain Sheave, with averted face.

"I say, don't you come a-nigh to us!" Luke Grommet repeated more warmly. "Don't go makin' no lines fast to this vessel, Mister! I got a little mite of a claim onto this hooker now, and I guess till that's all squared up good and right, you'd full better keep shy of her!"

"Claim! Well, say you *have* got a claim, will you pretend to tell me there's any reason for me not boardin' my own vessel?" the skipper asked. "I'm ready and willin' to settle for what's right."

"'T ain't his vessel no longer!" whispered Jasper Sheave excitedly. "He went and give her up once. She's yourn now, Luke, and don't you let him rob you, neither! Take and claim an even half right out spango, and you'll git it! The law'll give ye that much, ef only you stick out for it in good shape!"

"Well, Mister What's-your-name," said Luke

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Grommet, "we won't go gittin' noways het up over this thing. Maybe we can take and settle it right up now betwixt us, kind of neighbor-fashion, like. All ever I want for my resk and trouble is jest merely what the law sets out for all sich-like cases, and that's half the wuth o' the vessel."

"And cargo, and cargo! Say half the vally of the cargo too, for God's sakes, you!" put in Captain Sheave.

"That is, countin' in half the wuth of the cargo, nach'ally," Luke Grommet added.

"Oh, come now, gents, you must be jokin', like!" the young man urged. "That ain't hardly talking what you may call anyways reasonable! Why, Cap'n, that would ruin me complete! That would jest fairly do me up for good and all! I went to work and bought me a half of that little schooner only last fall. Some of 'em down home there where I come from promised me a little run of business freightin' if I fixed her up in fairly good shape, and I thought maybe I seen a decent livin' in her, come to once get a good start. I put every single dollar I had in the world into that vessel, gents, now that's God's honest truth! I'm ready and willin' to do what's right by you, and leave it out to any three men, but there's no good to talk halves, for I might full better take and

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drownd myself right here this minute. Now I tell you what I'll do, gents, and it's the very best I can do, too. This is my first trip since the vessel was repaired-up, and like enough it'll be the last, but I'll see someways that you have an even hundred and fifty dollars for what trouble you was to, if you're a mind to call it square at that. It'll come awful hard on us owners to raise that much more money now, but you can get that much out of it all clear, if you say the word!"

"A hunnerd and fifty devils, you mean, more like!" roared Captain Sheave, enraged beyond all restraint by this barefaced proposal. "Git straight to hell out o' this, you mis'ble thievin' little Kanuck, you! Sheer off from 'longside us, you plaguey young pirate! Don't you dast lay hand to this vessel's rail unless'n you want we should lam-baste the whole top o' the head off'n ye! After an honest, hard-workin' man takes and runs resk of life the wust way for ye, a-workin' by nights same's ary nigger slave tryin' to resicue your prop'ty, and jes' like's not save ye from going right plumb on the town, you'll begrutch him over and above day-wages for his trouble, will ye? Want to beat him out of his money clip and clean, no doubt! Prob'ly you cal'late to rob and steal jest this very way every place you harbor to, but let me tell you right out

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good and plain it's no good tryin' on them kind of gum-games 'round here, my fine feller, for they won't go down, nohow! Take and haul this vessel right in to the dock, Cap'n Grommet, afore ever the two sticks is stole out of her! Give an even hunnerd and fifty, or else leave it out, will ye? Set-fire ef ever I heard the beat of that for gall!"

With like withering remarks, the irate Captain himself seized the line leading to the wharf, and pulled till his already purple face assumed a truly apoplectic hue. As the tide had now risen sufficiently, the vessel was soon warped in alongside, where, in consideration of her former master's evidently desperate character, most thorough measures were at once taken to thwart any high-handed attempt at stealing her.

Springs and breast-lines were run to every available post and spile, and as an extra precaution the vessel was chained and padlocked to a huge old anchor which for years had lain embedded in the beach ahead. Then, once more remarking upon the wisdom of being sure rather than sorry in all such cases, shrewd Captain Sheave unrove the schooner's wheel-rope, and, after much difficulty, succeeded later in removing a box from her pump. Thus completely crippled, the schooner Seraph certainly seemed tolerably secure for the present, and after

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a more critical survey of the prize than he had yet found opportunity for, Captain Sheave's already favorable estimate as to the probability of a "proper good thing" was increased to the extent of advancing the considerable sum requisite for having the vessel libeled by a marshal from the Cape.

Luke Grommet then hastened home to bolt his breakfast, and returned in time to start, pale and haggard, in quest of the desired official. At the same time the schooner's master also left the Harbor for the nearest telegraph office, in order to communicate with the other owners.

Meanwhile the craft was zealously guarded by Captain Sheave and Ivory Grommet. Like a dog with a bone, the wary Captain watched every movement of the crowd gathered on the wharf beside them, and except in the case of a select few, roughly repelled all attempts of his townsmen to board the vessel. In the afternoon Luke Grommet returned with the marshal, who at once affixed a formidable-looking placard to the schooner's main-mast, whereupon all three beneficiaries heaved deep sighs of relief, and Captain Sheave's usually somewhat morose visage brightened noticeably. Under the feeling of perfect security now afforded, with grim humor he made mock obeisance to the Seraph's former master, and invited him to step on board

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and attempt taking charge again at any moment he saw fit.

The thick mist hanging over the water earlier in the day had gradually burned away, and after the marshal's departure the lucky trio sat for a time sunning themselves upon the deck-load, and busily conferring together. Suddenly the powerful sweep of oars was heard, and amidst black looks and muttered imprecations from not a few, the big white life-boat from the Station rounded the head of the wharf and shot up to its slippery steps. The Station captain at once landed, and was speedily in earnest conversation with Master Fairway, the young skipper, and others.

The Rev. Mr. Rowland had risen early and hurried to the shore as soon as possible after breakfast. With growing astonishment and indignation he had carefully noted each fresh indication of the wolfish greed which would seize upon every disabled vessel as legitimate booty. Several times he was with great difficulty restrained from intervening, but Captain Trunnel and Master Fairway on this particular occasion strongly urged a policy of non-interference for a time.

"We best take and leave right alone of 'em for a spell longer, anyways," said 'Lijah Trunnel. "The way they 're workin' of it this time, I cal'late

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all we've got to do is to jest merely give 'em a plenty of slack, and they'll have themselves in the limbos good and solid. Everybody to this Harbor knows that pore devil of a Luke Grommet is beholden to Cap'n Jasper, chock to his eyes, and so nach'ally the Cap'n he's ter'ble fierce to hitch hosses along of him in this matter; but jest you keep hands off a dite longer, Elder, and he's going to git his little come-uppance. Jest pay him out all the slack he wants, and see what he'll make of it! The plague-gone old reynuck has bit off a sight more 'n what he can chaw this time, accordin' to my way of lookin' at it!"

"I see they've clapped a plaster on her already," the Station captain said, with a glance at the placard on the vessel's mast. "I suppose they claim abandonment, then."

"Yes, sir, they do so!" said the skipper. "That's just the way they're trying to rob me. Why, we had to leave, for we couldn't stopped aboard over night, not the way we were fixed just then; that is, I say couldn't; I suppose we *could* made out to stop at a force-put, but, Jerusalem! 'T would been hard lines! We didn't have a dry rag to our names, nor so much as a dry bed-sack below, neither; for there was a big green sea come aboard of us chock aft, just before we kept her off

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to run for here, and flooded the cabin just fairly soako ! It fetched the stove adrift, and knocked the pipe all out of kilter, and left pretty much everything below all heads and points. We 'd eat nothin' only a handful of herring since daylight, and had stood turns to the pump till we both like to have dropped. She 'd parted both chains, you see, and never so much as once looked at the kaidge anchor we give her just a few minutes before she struck. I was in great hopes we could raise a tow-boat somewheres 'round here if we once got ashore, but seems 's though there ain't none within reach of here."

"See here, Skipper !" put in Mr. Rowland suddenly. "Let 's understand this thing a little more clearly. Seems to me there 's a point well worth noticing. The kedge was down when you left the vessel, you say ?"

"Yes, sir, sure thing she was down," the young man replied. "She was as pretty built a little anchor as ever I see, too, and all galvanized up neat as a pin. She come off'n a big yacht was wracked down home there last fall ; a reg'lar beaut of a one, she was."

"Land's sakes, why had n't you said before your kaidge was down ?" Master Fairway exclaimed. "I never understood nothin' about no kaidge !

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Maybe that alters the complexion of things consid'ble, ef you laid to a kaidge ! ”

“ Well, we let her go under foot, anyhow,” said the skipper. “ There wa'n't any great bigness to her ; only about two hundred pounds heft, I believe ; but, thinks I, you 'd full better be on bottom in room of layin' in here on deck under the heel o' the bowspreet, so I piecened out a line with a brand new coil of riggin' I had handy-by, so 's to give her a good long scope to jump at, you know, and let her go under foot only a short spell before we brung up on the laidge, but I guess likely she parted the line the minute she bit up on it.”

“ Well, well, Skipper,” said Laban Rowland, “ the question is, Did she bite up on that line at all last evening ? You say she brought up on the ledge just after you let go your kedge anchor as a last resort. In that case the ledge must have been close aboard of you under your stern, much nearer, no doubt, than you realized ; and if your vessel had the scope of line you claim, she never took up the slack of it before striking. At any rate, it's clear enough that you left your vessel lying at anchor, and came ashore hoping to get assistance of some sort. Is there any abandonment about that, Captain Truman ? ” he asked the Station captain.

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“If there is, then I miss my guess most damn—most awfully!” replied the Life Saver promptly.

“Why, blow my shirt!” cried Captain ‘Lijah Trunnel, “what’s more, Skip’, ef you give her anything nigh the big string of road you say, then that vessel never brought a pound’s heft of strain onto that line till after she slid off’n the laidge and drifted in a consid’ble ways this side of it; and now, mind ye, it’s dead sure she never floated in that fur till the tide had flowed quite a little *this mornin’*, because there ain’t the depth of water for it; any pore half-fool ‘round here will tell ye that much! Now what I’m coming at is this ‘ere: Sence midnight there ain’t been an air o’ wind stirrin’, fit to part your shoestring! Brace up, Skipper, you! Cherries’ll soon be ripe ag’in! That piece of riggin’ was *cut* this very morning bright and early by some plague-gone good friend o’ yourn! That’s what’s the matter, and no two ways about it!”

“Ain’t I got a right to step aboard there now, Cap’n?” the young skipper asked of the Station captain.

“Step aboard? Certainly you have!” said he. “Who’s going to prevent? I’d advise you to go below and fire up as soon as you can, and get her dried out fit to live aboard of again.”

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The skipper, however, went directly forward, and began to extricate a short piece of new line from beneath a litter of loose shingles heaped about the windlass. As he slatted it clear, one end was seen to be made fast to the bitts by a bowline. Stretched out at full length, the line failed to reach the bow-chocks by a foot or more.

“That’s what’s left of the line I bent on to the kaidge,” he said. “If it had parted itself, it stands to reason it would most likely gone in the chock, where the strain come.”

Adjusting his glasses, Captain Trunnel then examined the piece of rope with the eye of an expert. “Guess it’s safe enough to bate no piece of riggin’ ever parted no cleaner than that ’ere, not sence Adam cut his eye-teeth!” he remarked dryly. The Station captain and others also examined it closely, though the former made no comment. Meantime the skipper had gone aft, and taken a look below. Although the vessel only floated for a few hours each day in her present position, yet as the cabin was largely below deck, water stood a foot deep over the floor.

“I want all you gents should take notice of the works that’s been aboard here since last night!” the young skipper now called excitedly from aft. “Here’s everything all afloat below here! They

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kept me from coming aboard to look after my vessel, and they ain't pumped a stroke themselves; they even went to work and crippled the pump the first thing they done! And look here, the halliards are every one goners, to commence with; so 's the main-sheet and both blocks with it. There's all of fifty bunches of shingles missing, at the least calculation! Right here forrard of the house was twenty-two casks of Rockland lime stowed atop of a tier of shingles, and covered with a tarpaulin nice as a pin; the whole business is stole, huffs, horns, and hide! I bought me a brand spangin' new cook-stove there to Calais not a month since, and that's gone from below along with 'most a whole barrel of flour, and the clock, and no end of small truck. Pretty fair night's works a-wrackin', just for a commencement, ain't it?"

"How about this, Cap'n Sheave?" asked the Life Saving captain. "How did you find things when you took charge here?"

Captain Sheave had been listening the while with fast purpling face, but at this moment was so engrossed in muttered conversation with Luke Grommet as not to heed the question.

"Come, you! Speak up, Cap'n Jasp!" urged 'Lijah Trunnel provokingly. "Say something, ef 't ain't so bright, can't ye? Don't you hear Cap'n

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Truman askin' of ye what shape things was in the time you captured this packet? "

"Set-fire!" snarled Jasper Sheave, quite evidently no longer in his recent jubilant frame of mind. "I ain't got charge here! I had nothin' to do with pickin' this vessel up; I'm only jest a passenger aboard here. Same time, I don't believe no sich a story about no kaidge. You never see no sign of ary kaidge anchor ahead, did ye, Cap'n Grommet?"

"Heavens and airth, no! Not the least dite of a one!" Luke Grommet declared with great eagerness. "She was all clear when my brother and me come aboard to try and resicue her from strikin' adrift and going to sea again, like's not! There wa'n't no lime-kags on deck then, was they, Ive? and the halliards was all onrove, and the stove and the clock and the flour;—all them things was gone the time we got aboard; now that's the honest truth, Cap'n, ef I was to drop dead on this spot! All the way ever I can account for it is that there's folks must been aboard strippin' of her afore she got clear from the "Pup," and ef she had a kaidge ahead of her then, no doubt but what they might have cut the road¹ and lugged it off along of 'em, kaidge and all, maybe!"

¹ Cable.

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“ Well, Skipper, ” the Life Saver said, “ I don’t see but that this is something you ’ll have to settle between yourselves. I advise you not to lose any time about taking counsel, though. Owing to stress of weather, you leave your craft at anchor, and come ashore for assistance. She is boarded in your absence, and part of her gear and cargo is stolen. By the way, are you insured on ? ”

“ Not a cent’s worth on the vessel, and I ’m terrible sure there ain’t none on the cargo, ” the skipper answered.

“ Well, you leave her hoping to get help, ” the other went on, “ and are prevented from joining her again by parties now in charge, who threaten you with serious bodily injury ; all of which you have enough witnesses for. There it is in a nutshell, and if you haven’t a clear case, then call me a farmer ! We came over to offer any assistance you may be in need of. If you want help to sweep for your anchors out there, or if it’s your idea to try and repair-up so ’s to start along again, and we can help you in any way, why, just sing out. Anything in our line we ’ll be glad to do to help you out. ”

“ I thank you kindly, Cap’n, ” the skipper said. “ I ’m ten thousand times obliged to you, I ’m sure. To-morrow is Sunday, but no doubt the rest-part of

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my owners will be here by Monday, and then we 'll settle on just what we can do. We 're all poor folks that own in this vessel, Cap'n, and I can tell you we 'll be more than glad to have help in makin' her fit to swim again."

Sunday dawned perfectly calm, and as usual scarcely a sign of life was observable in the village till the day was far advanced. Then perhaps a loosely gowned female figure might be seen tip-toeing to the woodpile behind some house, and later smoke lazily curled from chimneys here and there. At Luke Grommet's humble dwelling on the Lower Cove road, still later in the day unhappy-faced children flattened their noses against the small window panes from within, and gazed longingly out into the bright sunshine. But their father's ideas of decorum upon the Sabbath were of that uncompromising nature which absolutely forbade child of his to set foot outside the house during the entire day, except for the purpose of attending meeting; and being withal a man whose offspring by no means stood in danger of spoiling for lack of corporal punishment, such abominable desecration of the day was commonly averted.

As for Deacon Canthook, on this warm Sabbath morning he still lay in bed swathed in thick flannels and reeking with liniment; a helpless victim

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of rheumatism since his recent indiscreet efforts at saving property from destruction. But Captain Jasper Sheave, in spite of the Elder's unwarranted behavior the day previous, preceded his buxom lady to the church, which, according to local phraseology, he now "ran," and on returning home, virtuously snoozed away most of the time until evening service.

In other parts of the village outward conditions were as a rule equally beyond reproach, and, though the day was almost summer-like in its mildness, scarcely a person could be seen on the main road for hours at a time. Under the lee of great boulders on the shore, a few boat-fishermen ventured to bait their tubs of trawls in readiness for the next morning's early start, but the usual death-like silence pervaded Kentle's Harbor on this Sabbath afternoon, till, with the waning light, the soothing tones of cabinet organs issued from each and every house.

That night, however, the weather again made good its reputation for fickleness by springing another very decided change upon a people long used to a chronic state of guessing. Soon after dark the wind suddenly struck from the northeast in a heavy squall which cut to the marrow. The moon and stars, first only dimmed by a ghostly smur of fast-

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driving vapor, were soon shut out entirely by fog so dense and damp that it blew on the gale from the writhing trees like rain. In conjunction with the uncommonly high course of tides culminating at about this date, the furious northeaster threatened to force the waters of the harbor up to a point very seldom recorded.

Shortly before daylight the Seraph's young skipper was awakened by a dancing red glare in his room at Master Fairway's, and looking out, saw flames and immense volumes of peculiar white, steamy smoke pouring from the ancient warehouse on the wharf belonging to Captain Jasper Sheave. The others of the house were aroused, and in spite of recent poor health, Master Fairway announced his intention of hastening to the scene, whereat his wife and niece protested so vigorously that for once in his life the old man took advice, and agreed to remain indoors.

"'T ain't any great of a burnfire, anyways," he said. "The building is nothin' only an old trap that ain't had any goods stored into her for years, without maybe it's a mess of old refuge krawm that Cap'n Jasp has captured off'n wracks one way and another, and ain't got shet of sence."

His guest, however, concluded to walk around to the scene, and on reaching the wharf at once fell

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in with Captain Trunnel. There were but few others present. Captain Sheave and his son L. Merle had succeeded in rescuing a few broken-down blocks and some rusty specimens of ship ironwork from a loft overhead, but it was impossible to enter the lower part of the building owing to heat and a peculiarly suffocating smoke. With a few others, the Captain was still busy drawing and throwing buckets of salt water at the doomed structure, and while those thus helping seemed for some reason much inclined to levity, the unhappy owner constantly raised his harsh voice in angry and strikingly profane lamentations. Under these circumstances the approach of 'Lijah Trunnel and the skipper was unnoticed.

"Skip'!" said Captain 'Lijah, taking the young man by the arm, "you've showed up here in the very nick of time, and no mistake! I want you should take a look along of me 'round here where the side is burnt chock through, and see what you can see in the gap; maybe 't will be kind of interestin' like, to ye. You're a young new beginner jest startin' in, you know, and you'd full better take warning by this 'ere little burnfire, and whenever you're handlin' lime, be pertikler to stow the kags some place where salt water ain't going to flow up 'round 'em and touch 'em off! Besides

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that, I myself don't call this plague-gone leaky old salt-shed no fittin' place to take and stow away brand spangin' new cookstoves, neither, leave alone all the rest-part of your chicken-fixin's ! ”

Screening his face from the scorching heat, the skipper peered intently between the charred studding on the northern side of the old building. A great bubbling heap of hissing, partially slacked lime lay on the floor, and in all directions were scattered staves and heads of the bursted casks, some blazing, and some as yet nearly intact, and showing plainly the stenciled brand of their contents. At one side, from under a tangled mass of rigging and blocks already smoking profusely, appeared the crown of a galvanized anchor, and close to it the skipper recognized his new cabin stove, with certain other well-known articles of furniture.

“ Oh, the tormented old thief ! ” he cried. “ Let's see him quick ! I want to lay this right to him to his face ! ”

But Captain Sheave saw the two men hurrying in his direction, and, veteran as he was, his courage failed, and he sought to avoid them.

“ Hold on there ! ” the skipper shouted. “ I just want to let you know that we're on to you in good shape this time ! I see just what become of my lime and shingles and stove, and all the rest-part

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of thê gear, and I promise we'll make it a sight hotter for you than what 't is here now, before we let this thing drop!"

"Cap'n!" cried Jasper Sheave, "sure's ever I live and breathe, I never knowed that lime and all them other things was stowed away into that buildin', now that's gospel truth I did n't! Lemmy, did I know when them things — where's Lemmy gone to? He was right here handy-by! Lemmy, you!"

L. Merle Sheave, however, had already thought it prudent to retire from the scene, and Kentle's Harbor knew him no more for many a day.

XII

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FOR some weeks Captain Jasper Sheave had fully realized that it was but a question of time when there would be open rupture between the Rev. Mr. Rowland and himself. Each day he saw more plainly that the new minister was not in the least disposed to ignore certain deplorable conditions of the Harbor, and hence must be ousted, as others had been before him. For much less offensive demeanor than his, more than one impecunious dominie had been starved into packing his scanty household effects and departing, more threadbare and sad-faced than when he came.

In the present case, however, the old standard process of starvation seemed less likely to be effective, for it had gradually been noised about that Elder Rowland was not entirely dependent upon the meagre salary offered him. In fact, gossip had variously reported him as being "well heeled," as having "consid'ble of a little batty," and at all events knowing perfectly well "where his next meal o' vittles was coming from." In this respect,

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then, if in no other, Captain Sheave and a few of his compeers realized that they were now dealing with a distinctly new proposition. Starving out, they had for some time feared, was in this instance likely to be a long-winded affair at best, and indeed there were now indications that, aside from his having some means of his own, it would be useless to attempt the thing with the new minister.

He had an undeniable faculty of making friends with people about the place who had not seen the inside of the meeting-house for years. Many such now went to hear him, — jokingly perhaps at first, but afterwards because it was wholly unlike what they expected, and they rather enjoyed it. Mr. Rowland had already secured a large, centrally located room, in which he organized a class in physical culture, with frequent meetings. This room was also used to some slight extent as a reading room, and he hoped gradually to develop further interest in this direction, though the outlook as yet was by no means encouraging. But the physical culture idea was an immediate success. Highly exaggerated accounts of the new Elder's prowess in the late affair with L. Merle Sheave *et al.* helped swell attendance on these meetings materially, where not only did the Rev. Laban Rowland win admiration and respect from many young fellows by giving them

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great odds at feats of strength and agility, but, putting on the gloves with them later, now actually seemed in a fair way to cuff the best of them into a regular habit of church-going.

For reasons best known to himself, Captain Jasper Sheave still continued to attend quite constantly, though it is safe to say from no liking of what he heard. On the Sunday evening previous to the burning of the Captain's old warehouse on the wharf, Mr. Rowland announced that he proposed speaking on the subject of "Kentle's Harbor as it appears to a stranger," and without more ado plunged at once into a heart-to-heart talk with his hearers, the like of which had certainly never yet been heard in the old meeting-house.

Laban Rowland was naturally a simple and forcible speaker, but when, as on this occasion, he especially endeavored to be explicit, every word was driven straight home. Never before, he said, in the course of somewhat extensive wanderings, had he discovered a community in which drunkenness was so common among young as well as old, where so low a moral tone prevailed, and where all evidence of public spirit was so generally lacking. Never before had he realized the existence of native-born Americans, and Americans, too, of the purest old New England stock, who had grown

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up, and alas ! were still growing up, unable to read or write their mother tongue. The schoolhouses of Kentle's Harbor he branded as at present breeding-places for disease, and totally unfit for occupancy. In no Western mining or frontier town, he told them, was the law more of a dead letter than it had apparently become in this locality, the settlers of which were among the first to colonize, and who for upwards of two hundred years took a most active and honorable part in the development of the country.

That men and women of exalted character still existed at Kentle's Harbor he was far from denying. There were undoubtedly many such there ; they shone like cheering beacon lights in the darkness, and he thanked God for their encouraging presence.

Then presently taking up the matter of wrecks in particular, he said, while assured on good authority that Kentle's Harbor was in nowise greatly unlike many other places on the coast in respect to its treatment of castaways, yet such treatment wherever and whenever found was nothing more nor less than the most cowardly and contemptible form of robbery, compared with which ordinary house-breaking was the occupation of brave and chivalrous gentlemen. A wreck-master, he plainly

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declared, was at present as great a necessity as a preacher, and such office he proposed to qualify for at the earliest possible opportunity.

It was at this period of his remarks that purple-faced Captain Sheave suddenly flung open the door of his pew with a loud bang, and, dutifully followed by his fat, waddling spouse, stamped down the aisle to the door in high dudgeon. Then another started, and another; family groups of four and five together flounced indignantly down the aisle till the house was fully half emptied.

Mr. Rowland paused during the confusion caused by this exodus, and noted with great satisfaction that nearly all whom he had any reason to consider his friends still remained seated. To these he then passionately appealed for help in an endeavor to bring about a better state of things in the old community. He admitted that, on first coming, he was appalled at what he saw and heard; that for a time he was undecided whether to stay or not, but now he declared he was resolved to continue in the place at all events, and put his shoulder to the wheel with the last half dozen who should stand by him.

In the mean time Captain Sheave and several other equally aggrieved citizens had organized an impromptu parish meeting in the vestibule of the church, and were earnestly discussing ways and

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means for speedily ridding the place of the Tartar whom they had caught in the shape of this mischief-making and altogether insufferable parson. If, as they apprehended, he was proof against starving out, it was quickly determined that he should be locked out, and by virtue of the mortgage on the meeting-house held by Captain Sheave, a plan was soon arranged for closing the building at the earliest possible day. Though it was fully intended that this master stroke should be kept secret for a time, portions of their somewhat excited conference were overheard ; and next day the talk of the village was about evenly divided between the perennial subject of feud in the parish and the most diverting manner in which Captain Jasper Sheave had been given away in his latest attempt at a shrewd move by the unexpectedly high tide.

When Laban Rowland walked into the village in the morning, he learned for the first time of the fire and its disclosures, and being told that Captain 'Lijah Trunnel was one of the first to be on the spot, walked around to his old vessel in order to hear all particulars.

Although Cap'n 'Lijah was credited with having in many ways reduced the labor of living to a minimum, yet, considering the well-known robustness of his appetite, the task of cooking for himself was

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by no means a slight one, and formed the topic of frequent half-joking complaints on his part. Mr. Rowland found the old man wiping his streaming face as he stirred an immense kettle of chowder on the hot cabin stove. Pushed to one side on the floor lay a mildewed old sail, with needle, thread, and sail-maker's palm.

"You must be expecting company, Cap'n, to judge from the size of that kettle," Mr. Rowland said.

"Godfrey mighty, Elder! that plague-gone kit-tleful will go me jest about three settin's at the most cal'lation!" declared 'Lijah, with a decidedly injured air. "I'm liable to eat consid'ble hearty, Elder; there's no rubbin' that out, I got to put away jest about so and so much in bulk un'neath my jacket jest about once in every so often, ye see, or else I commence to feel a good deal same's the last run o' shad. Everything is all kind of upsi'-down with me, and I ain't no account at all. Folks 'round often says I ought to be thankful I'm blessed with sich a good ap'tite, but sometimes I jest tell 'em there's two sides to that 'ere! I tell 'em sometimes they'd full better say 'cussed with a good ap'tite,' for it's nothin' in the world only a plague-gone nuisance to ary man, and in pertikler take a man hitched the way I be, this having a

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stummick into him that's always and forever a-yappin' and houndin' of him for more grub! Ef only I had a woman 'round to take and do for me a grain, I would n't say a word, but I ain't; I got to turn to and do for myself all soul alone, you see. Take it some days, it's much as ever I git a chance to set down and take my comfort smokin' a pipe or having a look at the paper, ary one, all on account of being obliged to stand by and tend out so sharp on this 'ere plaguey stummick of mine! Seems's though some days I would n't git no peace of my life, noways! Now you come to take it the way she went to work and played it on me only jest this very morning. I come back aboard here from Cap'n Sheave's little burnfire, — you knowed he had a one last night, I s'pose likely?"

"Oh, yes," the minister said, "and I wanted to hear all about that, too."

"We'll git 'round to that directly," 'Lijah went on. "I eal'lated to hunt you up to-day and tell you in regards to that burnfire, anyways, but I was tellin' of ye how plaguey onhandy-like I'm fixed here. I come back aboard last night and took me a couple o' winks of sleep, and turned out good and early for me, cal'latin' to repair-up this gaff-tops'l, and git her out from under foot in some kind of decent season. I set down to the table here,

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and I eat as hearty as ever you see in your life: a-plenty for ary three livin' men I cal'late I turned to and put away this mornin', sure, and 's I, 'There you!' 's I, 'there you be, all filled up chock-a-block, 'most to the hatch-coamin's! See ef that much won't stick to your ribs for a spell, so 's I can make out to git a hack at that plague-gone old tops'l!' 's I.

"Well, sir, maybe for the matter of an hour or more I never heard nothin' pertikler from her, and finally I kind of commenced to supposen I'd really made out to down her, but no! no-sir-ee, sir! Seems 's though she never cal'lated to act half-decent yit-a-while, and ef you'll believe it, Elder, it lacked only jest a quarter to eight by my time-piece there when she commenced to yip again!

"'Come now, 'Lijah,' says she, real polite and coaxin' like, at the fust commencement. 'Turn to and give us a little grain something more to eat, can't ye; there's a good clever soul!'

"'Not by a dinged sight I won't!' 's I, right up and comin'. 'Ain't I got nothin' else to do unless'n it's to tend out and chore 'round this vessel a dozen or twenty times a day for you? For king's sakes!' 's I, 'what in the name o' reason have you went and done a'ready with what I only jest fed to ye? Answer me that!' 's I.

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“ Wall, she never appeared to know nothin’ in regards to *that* ’ere. All is, she wanted I should turn to right off and let her mug-up some more, but you understand, Elder, I jest commenced then to git my back up, like. Thinks I to myself, this ’ere has gone a-plenty fur enough, accordin’ to my way of figgerin’.

“ ‘Now jest look a’ here, you!’ ’s I, ‘take and shet, right up short this minute, ef you know when you ’re well off! I can’t stand everything, no more’n a plague-gone stone-drag,’ ’s I, ‘and you won’t have another mite to eat, not till I git the leach of this tops’l roped off in good shape,—yes,’ ’s I, ‘and the kringle all spliced good and solid, too, and by fire! what ’s more,’ ’s I, ‘you let me hear jest one more solitary yip or yap come out of ye, and I’ll be jiggered ef I feed ye again till noon-time!’

“ Wall, sir, what d’ye s’pose she went to work and done then? Up and had a fit of reg’lar sulky mullygrubs for nigh onto an hour’s time, she did, and then all to once turned to and commenced punishin’ of me jest fairly scand’lous, and raisin’ ructions till seems ’s though I could n’t put up with sich obstropolous works no longer! No, sir! I finally was drove to take and heave every plague-gone thing else to one side, and commence waitin’ on

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her, same 's usual! Come to that, Elder, this life 's nothin' only so much comic misery, anyways! That 's all the way ever I can look at it!"

"Well, Cap'n," said Rowland, after a hearty laugh at the old man's quaint humor, "there 's misery enough, and no doubt some of it has its comic side. I 'm afraid I 'm not philosopher enough to see as much of it as you do, though."

"Elder," said 'Lijah Trunnel with sudden earnestness, "I seen misery and to spare in my day, and blame' small part of it comic, too, when you come down to the truth of the matter. But there, you! I jest try now to think that cherries 'll soon be ripe again! It don't do to git the dumps at this day o' the world, nowadays. There 's Obed Fairway, he was aboard of me t' other day a-takin' on about the ter'ble winter weather we 've had, and all kind of down in the mouth, he was."

"Set-fire, Obed!" 's I. "There ain't nothin' much to winter, when you come to look right at it! Here you be asleep a good part of the time, anyways; there 's half the winter wiped off to commence with, afore ever you know it! Come to take out the January thaw, and you 've eat a plague-gone great hole into the month o' January, pretty quick. Then there 's Feb'uary, she 's nothin' only a little short month, anyways, the most you can make of her, —

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a few freeze-ups and a flirt or two of snow, and *she's* done with! Then comes the March winds and April showers a-bringin' forth the Mayflowers, you know; — good land, Obed! 's I, 'where's the winter gone to? 'Tis 'most dandelion-time a'ready! 'Tain't but a cold rain or two now till dog-fish and horn-bugs and summer boarders is liable to strike! ' "

"You're a lucky man, Cap'n Trunnel," said Laban Rowland, laughing. "In many respects you're very lucky to be able to look at life in this way.

"You've got to laugh at it for jes' so much comic misery; that's all the way I can stivver through it," said 'Lijah. "Now I call it full better than play-actin' the way you poked it to 'em last night up there to meetin'. Ef you did n't say-over to 'em in proper good shape, then I'm mistaken! I would n't missed hearin' of it for a farm down east! "

"After I got home I began to be afraid I might have said rather too much at this time," the minister said. "I'd been worked up to the boiling point by this last affair, you see. It had all got to come, if I stayed here, though."

"You done jest the right thing, Elder! " Captain Trunnel cried. "You done right to fetch the thing

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right plumb to a head, without no efs nor ands about it! Obed Fairway he was nigh tickled to death when I come to tell him the pertiklers last night"—

"I noticed he was n't there last evening," interrupted Mr. Rowland. "Is n't he well?"

"Obed ar'n't a mite rugged this winter, now that's a fact," said 'Lijah. "He's fell away horrid of late, and keeps havin' them kind of spells like, of his'n. He looks bad in the face too, Obed doos, now'days. Seems's though his face was gittin' to look all kind of tide-rips and calm-slicks like, and take it last night he was feelin' so plague-gone streaked he stopped to home altogether. I dropped in there to his plae coming home from meetin', and give him an account of the way you socked it to 'em last last night. Obed allowed how hearin' tell the way you took and laid it down to 'em up there, so's to drive Cap'n Sheave and all the rest-part of that kind of krawm chock outdoors, why he said it put him in mind for all the world of the time he went to work and pruned up a plague-gone measly little old apple-tree of his'n that everybody had give up for no good at all. Obed allowed he knowed well he could n't do the old thing no hurt anyways, for the reason she wa'n't wuth a red nohow, and so he turned to one day and lopped her right down to

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bare-poles like ; reg'lar kill or cure style o' prunin' 't was, but seems 's though in room of being any-ways killt, the blame' little old tree jest up and took a fresh holt, and finally come out one of the best bearin' trees he 's got to his whole place there ! I would n't wonder and it should n't work kind of that way with the Harbor meetin'-house, Elder, now you 're well shet of all the old dead wood, and the plague-gone suckers that 's nigh stifled the life out of it ! ”

“ We 'll hope so, at least,” Rowland said.

“ The thing of it is, though,” continued 'Lijah, “ Cap'n Jasper he swears he 's going to lock her up on ye, right away off, and I guess likely he can do it too, accordin' to all tell of the way the old reynuck has got things fixed up there of late. Maybe you 'll have to find some other place to preach to for a spell, and I been thinkin' what 's to hender having meetin's right here aboard o' me, that is, come to have the weather mortify down a grain moderater. I got a pretty middlin' fair kind of a mains'l stowed away aft into my lazareet ;¹ one that was built a-purpose for me over to the Cape only the last of my goin', and I jes' soon as not take and trice her right up here acrost the boom, so she 'd make a complete awnin' like. I can set her up so taut she won't swag

¹ Lazarette, — a storeroom in the vessel's stern.

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down a mite on us, and she 'd be good and tight as ary shingle-ruff. 'T won't do her a particle of hurt, neither, Elder; 't would be a grand good thing for her to take and h'ist her up and air her out once in a while. I guess likely I should done it anyways."

"Cap'n Trunnel!" cried Laban Rowland, much touched by the old man's genuine interest in his behalf, "Cap'n Trunnel!" he said, grasping his hand, "you're a trump, and I thank you very much indeed for the offer, which we may be glad to accept. I've heard already that Captain Sheave intends to lock us out immediately, but still I hope that between now and next Sunday something may happen to change his plans. As the boys say, perhaps 'something may drop' before then. Perhaps that fire last night may turn out to have some bearing on the case, and that's what I wanted to ask you about especially this morning. They told me that you were one of the first ones there, and that you and the schooner's master both saw the stolen goods in the building."

"That's jest the very way of it, Elder. They told ye right that time, only we two wa'n't all the ones that seen the stuff, by no manner o' means. I went into Obed's comin' home from meetin', as I say, and give him a little hist'ry of the works up

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there, and how Cap'n Sheave cal'lated to fetch you up now with a round turn, and all this and that. It went to work and breezened up ter'ble spiteful from the no'theast yo know, jest after dark, and time I got back aboard here from Obed's, I see very plain there was going to be a master high tide, and no mistake about it. In room of turning in, I jest set down and mugged-up¹ a grain with half a dozen doughnuts, and a sliver of cheese, and a cup o' b'ilin' hot coffee, cal'latin' to wait up till high-water slack anyways, for 't was blowin' like a man, and accordin' to the way the tide had commenced to put up then, I did n't know but what she 'd float me, or else flow in here aft over the flatform, and wet things down for me, so thinks I, I best set up a spell, and see jest how this thing is going to work.

“My vessel ain't quite tight, you see, Elder. There's some plague-gone little place clean in forrard there where she will sweat² a drop or two in spite of me. I ain't got her quite repaired-up the way I cal'late to have her quick's ever lumber freights pick up a grain more, and so in room of botherin' 'round all the time to keep her sucked out bone-dry while I'm layin' here becalmed like, a-waitin', I jest let the tide flow in and out forrard there, pretty

¹ Lunched.

² Leak.

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

much the way it wants. The salt water keeps her good and sweet, you see, and it saves me a heap of work till I git ready to have her chinsed¹ up all good and tight again.

“Wall, so I set here into this chair, and I guess likely must lost myself a little grain finally, for fust thing ever I knowed, I dremp I was stifflin’ to death some place, and woke up all of a sudden. The plaguey wind had made out to blow open the door aft here, and this cabin was as chock full of smoke as an egg is of meat. I lep’ out on deck, and found the smoke drawed right down onto me from the east’ard somewheres, but it was so dun-geon thick-a-fog I could n’t seem to place it no pertik’ler spot. There was lime smoke mixed up into it, though, that I would bated a dollar along of ary man. I been afire loaded with lime myself, you see, and fit it for a week’s time tryin’ our dingdest to stifle it out, too, and I know pretty much what the smell of the stuff is like, soon’s ever water once gits to her.

“Bimeby there was a little small spurt o’ flame commenced to flicker through the fog to wind’ard there, and ’t wa’n’t so very long then afore I seen it come right straight from that old buildin’ on Cap’n Sheave’s w’arft, and no place else. I see

¹ Calked.

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right off, then, jest what was to pay. It wa'n't the fust time tide had flowed over the flatfom of that old shed, to my knowin', but 't was the fust time ever it found lime-kags stowed in there, and that 's what made the trouble, you see. I misdoubted right off whether or no the skipper's stove and riggin', and all his other gear, wa'n't handy-by to the lime-kags, but, time I got acrost there, the buildin' was all of a glow, pretty nigh her whole bigness. The old sir and his boy, they 'd fetched a larder and managed to hook out some old refuge krawm from up overhead; but what they saved wa'n't wuth hell-room, — that is, I would say, it never amounted to Hannah Cook. You 'll have to excuse me, Elder, ef a swear-word doos slip off'n my tongue once in a while. It's a plague-gone pore habit, I know, and I'm gittin' 'most old enough to know better!"

"It 's a habit hard enough to throw off, at any rate," said Rowland with a smile. "Speaking of swearing, though, I am astonished every day of my life to hear even the smallest boys of this place rattling off oaths that ought to put a pirate to shame, as the saying is."

"They do so, Elder! That 's a fact, and no two ways about it!" said Captain Trunnel, with a shake of the head. "Swear and cuss? Don't say

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

a word! Seems's though the heft of 'em now-days can't so much as open their mouths without they tear off a big chunk! Same time, Elder, ef you wanted to hear anybody take and reel it off by the yard, like, you should heard the old sir last night when he fust come down and seen his buildin' all afire. My, but wa'n't there some dretful sayin'-over about that time!"

"I can imagine about what it was like," the minister said. "I've heard him get started several times, myself. But there are a number of things I wanted to ask you about in regard to that fire. The skipper was there with you, was he?"

"Oh, yes, I run afoul of him quick's ever he got there, and made it my fust business to show him his stuff afire inside there. Godfrey mighty! but wa'n't he some riled up, come to take a good peek into that buildin' and see what was inside of her! I cal'late soon's ever his owners git here there'll be hell to pay, and no pitch hot, sure enough! The thing of it is, though, ef they ain't got any ready money to spare, maybe they won't be able to push this thing same's it should be, this time. That's the way it often doos work in these kind of scrapes, and it's jest what them wrackers count on, too."

"Then you have n't any doubt that Captain

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Sheave put the goods there himself?" asked Mr. Rowland.

"I would n't want to say for certain jest how about that," 'Lijah answered. "I ruther guess likely, though, that Lemmy, there, got in his fine work ahead of 'em all that mornin'. The little vessel he's been going fishin' in this winter lays right here in the cove the biggest part of the time, and from the way he took and dusted last night quick's ever he seen us heave in sight, I guess no doubt but what him and his crowd aboard there went to work and boated that lime and them shingles ashore into their dories, along of whatever else they could lay hand on the easiest. Lemmy, he's a cool star at all them kind of works, you see. He's always and forever been learnt that the one that got the most pickin's out of a wrack was the smartest of the whole lot. 'Tain't no part of stealin' to take and borry what you can from a wrack; that's real cute and cunnin', that is! The bloody fool of a skipper no business to stub his toe! You've got an extry good sample of how that doctrine works, now, Elder, and you'll be apt to git more ef you stop 'round here long enough.

"Take it this time, though, and I guess no doubt but what Cap'n Jasp sees they overreached themselves all around. Him and that pore devil of a

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

Luke Grommet commenced to feel consid'ble shaky even afore this 'ere dead give-away last night, and I cal'late the two of 'em would be tickled to death to cut loose now clip and clean ! The old sir claimed last night by all that was holy he never once drempt the stuff was into his buildin', but sich talk from him ain't going down wuth a cent 'round here. Maybe he never stowed it there hissself in the fust place, but it never laid there long without his bein' knowin' to it, now that 's sure as death and taxes ! He 's prowlin' down around them old buildin's on that w'arft every day of his life, and nobody can't so much as make a dory fast there without he knows it, and prob'ly 'll try to collect a nickel for it. Jest his say-so in regards to them goods don't amount to shucks here to this Harbor, Elder, for soon 's ever it come to lyin', Jasper Sheave from a boy up was always wuss 'n b'iled vittles, and I never see the day yit I would believe him so fur as I could take and sling a plague-gone bull by the tail ! Ef you 've drove him and a raft of them others like him out of meetin' for good, you can jest say ' Good red-dance to plaguey bad rubbidge,' and no two ways about it ! ”

“ I think we 've seen the last of Captain Sheave as a church-goer, at any rate,” said Laban Rowland. “ I want now to see the other owners of the Seraph

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as soon as they come, and between us all I hope we can convince the Cap'n that he is in a scrape, if he does n't realize it already."

"Him and Luke are scairt blue now, ef only the truth was known!" declared 'Lijah. "They went in too steep this time. Why, jest only think of their trying to grab one half vally for salvage, when all under the canopy ever they done was to paddle out aboard after the wind had fell to a flat calm and run a line to the w'arft!"

"Don't you think they had anything to do with cutting her adrift from the kedge anchor?" asked Rowland.

"Not a mite, though seems 's ef they 'd have to shoulder that job now," said 'Lijah Trunnel. "Luke Grommet up and give me his word they never see hide nor hair of no kaidge, and you can always believe what Luke tells ye, too. That kaidge went same time the lime went, and afore ever the vessel slid off'n the laidge. Luke Grommet is a pore onlucky creatur' that 's had an extry hard row to hoe, but he would n't lie nor steal, no more 'n the child unborn; same time he cal'lates to take all that 's comin' to him out of every wrack, jest like the rest-part doos. 'T was Cap'n Sheave put him up to claimin' halves that way, and there was a time years ago when maybe he might possibly got

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

his even half, but the law says different now'days in regards to them things."

"Of course it does," said Rowland. "An Admiralty Court now settles the amount according to circumstances. I wonder an old stager like Cap'n Sheave was n't better posted."

"Lord's sakes, you! He's posted on nothin', Elder! He seldom ever so much as reads his paper; says it always gives him headache to read print. Now you see by his bein' so plague-gone greedy like, him and Luke there have got the whole business to answer for, ef anybody's mind to take and shove it. Deacon Canthook he'd had a finger into it too, only for his bein' by the heels sick abed with rheumatiz."

"I wondered why he had dropped out of the affair so," said the minister. "He seemed about as hungry as any of them the other afternoon, certainly!"

"Oh, gracious, yes indeed!" Captain Trunnel said. "As a general rule, Deacon Canthook is chock full of business quick's ever there's a vessel ashore anywheres 'round here. He's apt to be busy as the devil in a gale o' wind, every mite. It's seldom ever he cal'lates to take back-water from the best of 'em 'round here them times, and no doubt but what he's layin' to bed

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home there, and jest fairly sweatin' blood these days!"

"I can't understand, for my part, why there's never been a wreck-master about here to look after these matters," said Mr. Rowland.

"Well, there's call enough for a one, that's sure," 'Lijah Trunnel replied. "We always had a one when I was a youngster, and there's a one to the Cape now, but I guess likely he don't 'tend to business any too sharp. Maybe 'tain't no sich snap of a billet, after all. Seems's though a wrack-master might be apt to git hisself disliked, without he made his moves jes' so."

"But why more than a fish-warden?" the minister persisted. "They tell me Cap'n Sheave is fish-warden here, and has been for years."

"Good land, Elder!" cried the old man. "You've got a grand good learnin', I don't misdoubt, but you ain't learnt the whole of it yit-a-while, have ye? There's consid'ble many holes into a skimmer, don't you know there is? Cap'n Sheave he's warden for this deestrect, as you say, but he's always jest knowin' enough to leave alone of folks 'round here pretty much clip and clean. Ef he cal'lates once in a great while he best seize a dozen or so 'short' lopsters, jes' so 's to make a bluff at doin' a little something when it comes time to

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

hand in his report, why he's always cute enough to strike off way down the shore some place and jump on some pore old crippled-up devil of a lopster-catcher that ain't liable to turn and hit him, and that ain't got a dollar to buy hisself clear with, nor no friends to pick the thing up and make trouble, neither.

"There's a plenty right here to this Harbor that rec'lects the time when Cap'n Sheave rode chock down to the 'Bowl o' the Ladle,' and hid behind a stone wall nigh half a day waitin' to take a mess of 'shorts' off'n a pore old feller eighty-odd year old, when he come draggin' his old bones home from pullin' his pots outside. That's about the way they work it, Elder. There ain't a lopster-catcher on this coast but what handles 'shorts' right along, and all he can git holt of, too, but as a rule these 'ere wardens know plaguey well who 't is tol'ble safe to light on once in a while, and who 't is quite healthy to leave right alone of. They most generally will take and send word a day or two ahead afore they start out on their rounds, you see, so folks will have plenty of time to be red of their 'shorts,' but ef there's any seizin' of much account cal'lated on, then it's most always a case of swap 'round, like. The warden in one deestRICT grabs holt of a batch o' 'shorts' in the deestRICT next to his'n,

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maybe, and the feller over there comes acrost and doos up a little dirty work for him. That way they cal'late to keep their own townneys from gittin' so plague-gone down on 'em, but it's a wonder to me their ruffs ain't burnt over their heads!"

"Why, then!" Rowland exclaimed, "the whole thing seems to be as much of a farce hereabouts as the prohibitory liquor law!"

"Wall, I won't say as I'd want to go as fur as all that!" returned Captain Trunnel, laughing. "I guess likely, though, there ain't a great sight to choose betwixt the two. You take lopsters, and there's enough sight more truck in 'shorts' than what there is in 'counters' all the time, and as fur as rum drinkin' goes, you can see for yourself there's any God's quantity of rum fetched into town one way and another, and dretful pore rum at that. Nobody 'round here pretends to pay no heed to liquor law nor lobster law, ary one, and I always claim 't would be full better to do away with 'em both outright. The way I look at them things, you ain't need expect the young fry to grow up with any great sight of respect for laws, when all the two laws ever they hear tell much of anything about are only jest laughin' stock the heft o' the time!"

"I can shake hands with you on that, Cap'n

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

Trunnel!" said the minister. "That's my idea exactly! Laws like these which are so constantly violated with impunity are much worse than none. They actually become a menace to society instead of a protection, and it's easy to see their effect about here already. But I must go," he added, looking at his watch. "It's getting along in the day."

"Don't be in no hurry, Elder. Keep your settin', do now. I'd be real pleased to have ye stop and take a bite along of me."

"Thank you, Cap'n, thank you," Mr. Rowland said. "They will be expecting me at home to dinner, so I think perhaps I'd better not stay to-day."

"Wall, now, Elder," the old man then said, "ef you was feelin' anyways out of kilter this mornin', I got a grand good med'cine right aboard o' me here, called the 'Great Universalis' Pacific,' that'll fix you up all tanto in less'n no time. She's a med'cine that won't never lose no time takin' holt, now I'll guarantee ye, and I ain't been without a bottle of her aboard o' me for risin' thirty year. I git her right direct from the old lady that mixes her up, way down east 'most to the jumpin' off place. Pleased to have you stop and try her, Elder, or I jes' soon's not take and fill you up a little small phial of her to keep right by ye."

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"Thank you, Cap'n, you're very good, but I don't believe I'll trouble you this morning, for my health is really excellent," said Rowland. "I hoped to run across Master Fairway somewhere about the town this morning. Has he been here yet?"

"You'll find him right there to home, I guess no doubt, Elder," 'Lijah said.

"Yes, well then, perhaps I'll — I think, though, I won't stop now it's so late," Rowland stammered. "There's one thing more I'd like to ask you about, Cap'n Trunnel, before I go, and that is, do you believe that Asa Kentle ever ran down the Spurlings' green shay?"

"No, sir, I don't believe no sich a thing, and never will, neither!" answered 'Lijah instantly. "I've knowed Asy Kentle ever sence there was any bigness at all to him, and I been shipmates along of his father afore him, and I tell you, Elder, he never done sich a thing in this world. Obed Fairway and me have come nigher to havin' words over that 'ere than ever we done afore. I do git crosser 'n two sticks argufyin' along of him by the hour a-tryin' to make him act raytionable, and shift his mind; but there! Obed, he's set, you know, as a plague-gone old post, and he allows he can't never see for the life of him how anybody

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

else ever done the job unless'n it was Asy. No more can I, for that matter; but, same time, as long as Asy Kentle says right out fair and square they never once sighted them two Spurlings that day, why, that settles it, fur's ever I'm concerned. Betwixt you and me and the windlass bitts, Elder, it's this plague-gone fallin' out along of Asy Kentle that's raised the very Jesse with Obed this winter. I never seen a man age-up the way he has, not in all my goin'. He's got a plenty salted down to live on good and comfortable, Obed has, so's by good rights he'd ought to lay right back now and take some peace of his life these days, in room of bein' all tore out same's he is. He'd ought to be kind of renewin' his age like, now'days, and takin' his comfort right along. Now this 'Pacific' that I've got here aboard o' me I'll guarantee to make a brand spangin' new man of him in a short time, ef only he'd turn to and foller her right up anyways reg'lar; but you see he's always and forever jes' so plaguey set you can't never coax him 'round to take nothin' in the shape of med'cine without it's a mess of boughten krawm that he gits to the store, and I jes' soon take chances havin' me in one of these 'ere plague-gone college doctors as to drink that pizen.

“I s'pose likely Asy Kentle has acted a little

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grain quick-tempered and headstrong like ; but still, I don't know as you can blame him so very much, neither, when you come to look right at it. It's a ter'ble old snarl of it, Elder, and I only wisht to God it could be straightened out someways. Honest and true, I believe it's killin' Obed Fairway, and Asy, he says to me only a short spell sence, he 'most hoped he 'd go outside some one of these mornin's, and never come back to turf again. Then there's Clarry ; she ain't the gal she was, by no manner o' means. Clarry always cal'lates to put her best foot forrard, and to keep a good stiff upper lip, but this thing has took holt of her scand'lous, and no two ways about it. She can't fool me no great in regards to it ! I tell Obed that betwixt his bein' so plague-gone pig-headed, and Asy Kentle's actin' so kind of hot-headed like, pore little Clarry gal there to home has to stand in the gap, and it's takin' it out of her horrid."

"It's a most miserable business all around," said Laban Rowland with something very like a groan. "I can't tell you how much it troubles me, Cap'n Trunnel. I owe my life to Asa Kentle's bravery, as you know, and Master Fairway's family seem to me the salt of the earth. It's the greatest pity in the world that this horrible affair should have come between them as it has. I've spent days

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

thinking and talking it over, and racking my brain to find some way of clearing it up, for I've never thought for an instant that Asa Kentle had anything whatever to do with the drowning of those men. The belief that he had seems to me almost like insanity. If I did nothing else but bring these people together again, I should feel well paid for coming here."

"You could n't be into no better works, Elder," said Captain Trunnel. "I wisht to glory you might make out, but it's a ter'ble blind job. Seems's though no matter what way you come at it, you're bound to fetch right up with a round turn, for take it on the face o' things, that little schooner of Asy Kentle's was the very boat that drowneded them two Spurlings, and I'm afraid that's about all the satisfaction ever you'll git out of it."

That noon the other owners of the Seraph arrived, and later held a long consultation on board, in which Laban Rowland and others participated. As a result, the already apprehensive Captain Sheave was accused point blank with receiving a large quantity of stolen goods, while it was strongly intimated that he and his companion had cut the vessel adrift from her kedge anchor. In his extremity, Captain Jasper rushed into the additional expense of legal advice from the Cape, but returned in due

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time noticeably anxious to settle on the best terms he could arrange.

In the end the matter was allowed to drop on his replacing everything taken from the schooner, paying a sum in cash to compensate the captain for his delay, and signing a lease of the meeting-house to the Rev. Laban Rowland for one year from date, with privilege of purchase at the end of that time.

During this while, the Life Saving crew had made several trips across from the distant Station, and, with their wonted meddlesome officiousness, not only recovered the Seraph's two anchors, but assisted in "fishing" the broken boom, and temporarily stopping her leaks with thick canvas and boards. Such unwarranted interference naturally called forth fresh execrations upon the service, and when at high-water, in the dead calm of the next Sunday afternoon, the big eight-oared life-boat towed the vessel out to an anchorage in the harbor once more, it seemed indeed that a despotic government was bent on trampling the people under foot rough-shod.

While the western sky still glowed behind the dark spruce-grown hills, across the crimson water came the hoarse crackle of blocks, and the little schooner Seraph was seen to be spreading sail to a gentle breeze from off the land. A few moments

A SHREWD MOVE FRUSTRATED

later, just as the church bell rang out clearly on the cool evening air, with her two men fast heaving at the clicking windlass, she once more filled away upon her interrupted voyage.

XIII

A YACHT IN TROUBLE

FRAGRANT "laylocks" now bloomed abundantly in many front yards of the Harbor, and summer at last seemed to be in sight. The usual acrimonies of March town-meeting were forgotten, or perhaps oftener reckoning therefor was now held in abeyance until some future occasion. Notebook in hand, the newly elected road surveyor began his rounds, notifying and warning the inhabitants of Kentle's Harbor either to pay to him their annual road-tax in cash, or to appear together upon an appointed day and work it out upon the highway with pick and shovel. With very few exceptions, citizens of the Harbor invariably chose the latter alternative.

Among the select few, however, who never labored upon the roadway in person, was Captain Jasper Sheave, for with his eye eternally fixed on the main chance, the shrewd Captain had long since evolved a scheme worth two of that. In his stead there always appeared some poor half-witted creature hopelessly in his debt, and easily impelled to put in the requisite amount of time at a much lower

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rate per hour than the generous wages voted by the town. Thus, as he himself remarked, far from being out of pocket on account of the road-tax, by the simple application of a little hoss-sense to business affairs, Captain Sheave and certain others happily turned an honest dollar for themselves.

It was, of course, fully understood that beyond calling men out for the time necessary to discharge their debt, the road surveyor had no authority whatever over them, and actual work upon the roads cut the smallest possible figure in the programme of this pleasurable gala day in the spring. It is true that a few fortunate possessors of oxen were likely to cancel their tax at short order on this occasion by dumping upon designated portions of the road huge loads of stones and jagged fragments of ledge in size varying from an egg to a man's head; after which high-priced services they were at once free to return home, or remain and participate in the picnic, as they saw fit. The loads of rough material thus deposited laid practically undisturbed by human hand, and for many a day afterwards, rather than attempt the passage of such "repaired-up" sections of the road, drivers of vehicles unhesitatingly took grave chances of capsizing in the ditch by the wayside.

While busily engaged in working out their road-

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tax under this favorite time-honored system, a suspiciously hilarious group of citizens sat in a long row upon an old vessel's spar lying alongside Captain Ezra Futtock's store in the village. Here in the warm sun they smoked and chewed and spit and swore sociably, and jovially discussed the humors of the situation. They recited numerous fetching anecdotes of that compelling nature which instantly rivets the undivided attention of similar gatherings, and so the merry jest went round. They talked politics and the price of fish, and otherwise whiled away the hours in improving conversation, meanwhile carefully noting the flight of time by frequent glances at their watches.

Earlier in the day a schooner yacht had entered the harbor, and occasioned no little remark, not merely from anchoring in hopeful proximity to unbuoyed "Fiddler's Pup" ledge, but also as being the first yacht of the season to appear in these waters.

Shortly before the looked-for hour which should release the tired squad of citizens from their arduous labors upon the long-suffering roads, a boat from this yacht landed at the rough steps near the end of Ezra Futtock's wharf. After considerable difficulty, a majestic, florid-faced personage of astonishing abdominal girth, clad in a uniform fairly ablaze with gold lace and brass buttons,

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finally succeeded in mounting the steps, at the top of which he paused for breath after such unwonted exertion. Followed at a respectful distance by two sailors in white, and with an ever increasing frown of displeasure upon his ruddy countenance, this officer soon advanced up the wharf with a distinctly martial tread which jarred his expansive chin like a bowl of jelly. Nearly abreast the staring group of citizens the imposing looking stranger paused, and, adjusting a pair of eyeglasses, began a deliberate and haughty survey of the premises.

From fast growing signs of irritation it was quite evident that the visitor was seriously offended, and numbers of the onlookers became somewhat apprehensive. Was it possible that the newly arrived craft was no pleasure yacht at all, but on the contrary a vessel of war in disguise? Certainly the stranger's general appearance might betoken command of a battleship with superimposed turrets. And here the two men in attendance were suddenly observed to be conversing together in one of the many strange tongues now characteristic of the American navy. Perhaps the boat bore an officer of high degree, and yet no more attention had been paid to his disembarkation than to the landing of a common mortal. No brass band had struck up "Hail to the Chief" as he floundered upon the slimy

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steps of the old wharf; not even a deputation of citizens had welcomed his advent in any way whatever. There were absolutely no decorations to hide the nakedness of surrounding buildings, most of which had unquestionably been allowed to become quite old and moss-grown by their owners.

The little group of now thoroughly sobered men was suddenly seized with the alarming conviction that the imperious officer meditated ordering the village of Kentle's Harbor swept out of existence forthwith. With bated breath they anxiously watched the countenance of the stranger, fully realizing that in all probability the fate of the town was hanging in the balance. Providentially, at this juncture the better nature of the officer seemed to prevail. Actuated by some innate feeling of humanity, he decided to allow the town to exist for the present. The hard and cruel look in some measure left his face, and the muscles of the bystanders relaxed somewhat. A few of the bolder ones among them even ventured to breathe again. Finally, to the unspeakable relief of all, raising aloud a piping falsetto voice, with which Dame Nature in a humorous mood so often equips huge masses of adipose tissue, the gorgeous stranger deigned to inquire whether yeast-cakes were obtainable within the limits of Kentle's Harbor.

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Some minutes later, having settled this momentous question in Ezra Futtock's store close by, he asked particularly concerning the owner of Fairway's Point, with whom the lady who owned the yacht desired to confer. Captain Ezra then pointed out the house of Master Fairway, and informed the stranger that by landing at the wharf where 'Lijah Trunnel's old vessel lay, the distance to walk would be trifling. Soon after returning on board, the boat was seen to leave the yacht again, this time, however, with several ladies, and pull directly towards the old schooner Elizabeth.

It was nearly low water, and all were glad to avail themselves of some ingeniously devised steps which Captain Trunnel seemed delighted to lower over his old vessel's rail for their accommodation. He was unable to inform them whether Fairway's Point was in the market or not, but most obligingly accompanied the ladies nearly to the house of Master Fairway, meantime imparting information on a variety of subjects to the best of his ability. He then returned to his vessel, where the resplendent yacht captain was grandly pacing the wharf with a cigar.

"Neighbor, you," began 'Lijah Trunnel at once, "I did n't want to say nothin' much to ye till the women-folks was well out the way, but you've

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picked ruther of a pore berth for your craft out there. What water are you drawrin' now?"

The yacht captain looked superciliously at the shabbily clad old man, but seemed inclined to ignore his question entirely.

"All the reason why I asked ye is jest this 'ere," continued Captain Trunnel. "You're prob'ly all right enough where you be as long as it holds good and mod'rate same 's it is, or while the wind hangs out here on the eastern board, but jes' sure 's ever we come to git an air off'n the land to the west'ard, you're going to tail down consid'ble handy to a plague-gone bad little laidge o' rocks there is there."

"See here, old feller," said the yachtsman, stopping short in his walk for a moment, "you attend to your business, if you've got any, and I'll look after my own. See?"

"All right, Cap'n; 'nough said!" replied 'Lijah coolly. "All is, ef you git hung up, don't go 'round here sayin' nobody told ye no better!"

In half an hour the ladies returned, bringing with them Clara Fairway. She had evidently been enlightening them somewhat in regard to Captain Trunnel, for one of the three, a rather small and very attractive looking brunette, immediately called him by name, and, most winningly introducing herself as Mary Loring of Boston, claimed fraternity

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as being the owner of the schooner yacht lying in the harbor. And notoriously susceptible as he was to the charms of the fair sex, Captain Trunnel was at once completely won over by the genuine interest shown in him and his old vessel, which latter his friendly young visitor was at especial pains to refer to as though still capable of actual service.

Clara Fairway, it appeared, had accepted an invitation to go out and view the yacht just purchased by Miss Loring after several seasons cruising in a smaller craft. Between her and Clara Fairway there already seemed to exist the best of understandings, and they chatted and laughed together quite like old acquaintances. On the way out their boat drew near to a small fishing schooner at anchor.

“Good Intent!” Miss Loring exclaimed as they approached. “What a pretty, old-fashioned sounding name for a vessel! And see,” she said, lowering her voice, “do look at that handsome, yellow-haired young giant standing there on deck! Why, he’s the perfect figure of a young Viking in shirt-sleeves!”

But the young Viking plainly had some communication to make with the passing boat, for he stepped quickly to the rail of his vessel, and politely raised his hat to the ladies.

“Excuse me,” said he, “but your yacht is

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anchored rather too near in on the eastern shore. There 's a small laidge makes out from the " —

Then at this instant recognizing Clara Fairway seated in the stern-sheets with the others, Skipper Asa Kentle stopped short in his speech and stared at her in blank astonishment, meanwhile blushing to the roots of his curly hair.

" Good evening, Asy ! " said Clara sweetly, though also blushing violently.

" Why, Clarry ! How came you — why, how d' ye do ? " Asa stammered in hot confusion, which made him handsomer than ever. " I only wanted to tell the cap'n that there 's a bad laidge a short distance to the east'ard of him, and in case of a shift of wind, he might find it. "

" I know all about your ledge, my man. We 're nowhere near it ! " the captain said tartly.

But Miss Loring turned squarely about on her seat and bowed acknowledgment. " Thank you very much indeed, captain ! " she called in tones clear as a bell. " He thinks we 're not anchored in a safe position, it seems, " she said to the captain.

" What these smart Alecks down here think is nothin' to me, marm, " he piped. " I 've anchored my vessel according to my own best judgment, and there 's no better berth in this harbor ! "

" Miss Loring ! " Clara Fairway exclaimed, some-

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what incensed at the foppish yachtsman's allusion to Asa Kentle. "If Cap'n Kentle says your yacht is anchored too near that ledge, you may be sure it's a fact, for he has been going in and out of this harbor all his life, and is considered the smartest fisherman anywhere about here!"

"We shall certainly know before night just how near we are to it," Miss Loring said quietly.

After being shown over the yacht for some time, and making final arrangements for a visit to Fairway's Point in the morning, Clara returned to shore. Soon afterwards Miss Loring again questioned the captain very particularly concerning the sunken ledge, upon which that rugged mariner, with a highly aggrieved yet dignified air, at once produced an immense roll of charts, together with sundry much polished instruments, whereby it was mathematically demonstrated that the insignificant little ledge was far distant, and that choosing the yacht's present position for anchoring was, indeed, a master-stroke of seamanship.

As Miss Loring and some of her guests took a last promenade on deck before retiring that night, a black wall of cloud was seen to have risen in the west. Once or twice faint flashes of lightning played about its edges, and the low rumble of distant thunder gave warning that the season of

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sudden tempests was approaching. By midnight incessant blinding flashes lighted up an immense mass of cumulus towering far into the zenith. Scattering drops of rain suddenly blurred the long, streaming reflections of vessels' lights on the calm water, and almost immediately came a great soughing of wind from among the spruces rising thickly behind the town. For a moment the air was filled with the overpowering odor of lilacs. Then one after another the various craft in the harbor careened slightly and swung quickly to their anchors, the halliards beating a hollow tattoo upon the masts under a hot, stifling gust from the shore, which showed plainly that somewhere inland the fierce New England summer had already set in with its usual severity.

Awakened by the brilliant lightning, Miss Mary Loring was being soothed once more to sleep by the musical diminuendo patter of the passing shower on the deck just above her, when there came a loud shout from outside.

"Ahoy, on board the yacht!" cried a full, deep voice, which Miss Loring at once realized she had heard before, though where she could not at the moment recall. There was then a few moments' pause, during which no response came from the vessel.

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“Hallo there, forrard!” the voice cried again.
“Turn out! You’re hung up on a laidge!”

Still there was no sound from forward, though several of the guests were anxiously calling to know what was the matter.

A boat bumped alongside the yacht; the heavy tread of feet was heard on deck, and once more the strong voice rang out, —

“Below there, you fellows! What d’ye cal’late to do; die outright soon’s ever you turn in? Get a move on, some of you! You’re hung up on a laidge, and the tide’s pinched off¹ a good foot a’ready!”

Soon there ensued a gradually increasing babel of tongues, as through the combined efforts of Asa Kentle and ’Lijah Trunnel the situation slowly dawned on the half-wakened Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, and Russian Finns comprising the yacht’s crew, till at length even the shrill squeal of the porcine captain himself was recognized.

Miss Loring had hastily donned some thick wraps, and now stood anxiously listening in the companion-way.

“Take your lead and sound ’round this vessel, Neilsen!” piped the captain to one of the sailors.
“I don’t believe a word of this cock and bull story about her being aground at all!”

¹ Ebbed.

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“Look a’ here, Cap’n!” Asa Kentle said quickly, “Let me tell you that you have n’t got a minute’s time to lose now in sounding, or anything else, for the tide’s going fast! Your vessel’s stern is right atop of the ‘Fiddler’s Pup,’ and has come out of water pretty near a foot by this time, you’ll find. If you don’t get to work and make out to heave her clear mighty quick, she’s going to lay down on you and fill with the next flood, spite o’ fate! You could n’t placed her in no worse shape, for the laidge is bold-to on this western side, and there’s over three fathom of water under your bow!”

“Damnation, man! We ain’t on any ledge!” cried the captain. “My chart gives me four fathom and mud bottom right where we lay this minute!”

“That shows you don’t want to figure any too close by them government charts!” Asa retorted. “I can show you a laidge outside here that has picked up two vessels to my own knowin’ inside a year’s time, and right where the chart gives you a plumb six fathom! But you’ll find this little ‘Fiddler’s Pup’ laidge is down on every chart ever I seen yet, plain’s the nose on your face!”

“Of course it’s down on the chart, but this yacht ain’t within a hundred yards of it!” insisted the captain.

“You stop and argue it over a spell longer, and

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you 'll be apt to find just how nigh neighbors you are, I 'm thinkin' !" said Skipper Asa. " Can't you see you 're dropping by the head a'ready ? "

" Dere 's a damn great big rock right here yoost under de stern, anyvay, Cappen ! " cried Neilsen excitedly at this moment, as he repeatedly bobbed his lead-line up and down. " Dere 's only yoost about a faddom of water ofer it alretty, and dis wessel is hove out more as two foot ! "

" Heave short on your chain, then, and she 'll come off easy enough ! " the captain snapped. " I 'll report this to Washington the first thing I do ! If anything has picked us up here, the chart ain't correct by a whole row of apple-trees ! "

The men then hastened forward, and began heaving quickly on the windlass. Miss Loring and one or two of her guests also went forward, and stationed themselves where they could best watch proceedings. Before the chain had any considerable strain brought upon it, the anchor lost its hold, and began to drag over the bottom.

" It 's no use ; she 's walking ¹ home ! She 's give up her holt altogether ! " cried Asa Kentle, looking over the vessel's bow. " Great Scott, Cap ! Here 's your anchor right under foot, and foul at that ! No wonder she would n't take a holt, for there ain't

¹ Dragging.

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five fathom scope to your chain! Your courage must be pretty good, to turn in by nights every soul aboard, with only that much for a string o' cable ahead of ye! I cal'late if this little fire-squall had struck anyways hard just now, you'd dragged chock up among the junipers ashore there!"

Without making any reply the captain now nervously ordered the other anchor carried out ahead in one of the yacht's boats, and after a vast deal of confusion and broken English, not to mention a badly broken thwart in the frailly built boat, this was finally accomplished. The windlass was again manned, but no sooner had the men commenced to heave in good earnest upon the light chain than it parted. By this time the yacht had listed very noticeably to port.

"Well, she's going to lay here over this tide fast enough," said the captain, with somewhat less cockiness than usual. "We've done all we can, and no man can do more. She'll lay easy, I guess. There's no sea on."

"Lay easy!" Asa Kentle repeated. "She'll lay down flat on her broadside if you don't twitch her off; that's about how easy she'll lay! She's liable to turn turtle¹ on you before flood-tide again! Accordin' to your own tell, she's an extry long-

¹ Capsize.

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legged¹ built vessel, and her stern is going to be hove out all high and dry, with two or three fathom o' water under her amidships! You've *got* to twitch her off, or else it'll be all day with her, Cap!"

"How in hell are you going to work to twitch her off, and no tow-boat within fifty mile of this cursed little hole?" the captain squealed.

At this point Miss Loring stepped quickly up to Asa Kentle.

"Captain," she said, "if you know of any way to get us out of this trouble, I beg of you to do it if possible. The men will obey any orders from you, — as far as they are able," she added.

"Well, marm, I don't want to take the reins away from any one," said Asa. "But there's no time for talk now, and if you say the word, we'll give her a good try, though it's a pretty hard chance after the tide has pinched away so much. Good Intent ahoy!" he shouted through his hands to leeward.

"Hello there, in a minute!" came the instant reply.

"Let go your other anchor under foot, and then give 'em both every fathom of scope you've got, clean to the batt's-end! Now, men," he said, turning to the yacht's crew, "trot out the best piece of

¹ Deep.

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riggin' you've got aboard in the shape of a haws and jump lively, too, for every minute counts here against us! Now have your boat alongside ready to run that line to my vessel quick's ever the Lord will let ye, and here! some of you take hold with me and make sail on this packet. We'd better twist the keel out of her than let her stay overboard hung up in this shape!"

There was still considerable breeze left after the squall, and as sail after sail was spread to it, the straining vessel began to roll deeply from side to side.

"Now then, boys, what d'ye say!" cried Skipper Asa, as the windlass was once more manœvered. "Give it to her all together! Set her up for a good one she's worth! Lively, now!"

The pawls clicked rapidly, and gradually the dripping line to the Good Intent came out of water. Soon it began to creak in the chocks, and the yacht's bow at length was seen to swerve slightly. Meanwhile she continued to roll so deeply that standing on deck became difficult, and at a potent crash of dishes from somewhere below, several of the ladies shrieked in fright. The clicking of the windlass grew slower, and finally stopped.

"The line don't stand no more, sir!" panted one of the men.

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Asa reached over the bow and felt of the hawser. It was like an iron bar.

“Slack up on your heaving, aboard the yacht!” some one shouted from the Good Intent. “Our win’lass is goin’ back on us ! Don’t heave another stroke !”

“That’s all the law will allow us, then,” said Skipper Asa. “Get aloft and shake out the gaft-tops’l, quick ! Give her both of ’em, and the jib-tops’l too, while you’re about it. Some of you here get out your stays’l and bend it ; we’ll see what’ll be the first thing to carry away ! This is a clear case of kill or cure now, and no mistake !”

Several of the men began to clamber about the slanting deck in an effort to obey these orders, when with a grinding roll that nearly sent all into the scuppers, the vessel freed herself in a great lurch forward, and once more floated in deep water. The hawser was quickly cast off, and Asa Kentle rushed aft to the wheel, but finding, as he half expected, that the rudder was unhung, at once let go all head sails by the run, and anchored as soon as the ledge was at a safe distance.

Miss Loring and her friends as well were most profuse in their expressions of gratitude to Skipper Asa and his companions for their timely warning and assistance. In an undertone Miss Loring de-

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clared her strong desire to reward them more substantially, but all refused to listen to anything of the sort, and after a thorough trial of the yacht's pump had shown that she remained fairly tight in spite of so severe a straining, they took their leave.

The Good Intent had left the harbor next morning hours before Miss Loring and several guests went ashore to visit Fairway's Point with Clara and her uncle. Very naturally Miss Loring at once gave a vivid account of the night's adventure, and stated that she had already discharged the captain of her yacht, whom she designated as lazy and incompetent, and a very peacock for vanity. The vessel had been in his charge the previous season, and she had taken him on the recommendation of the former owner, whose yachting experiences with this particular officer in command had not unnaturally disgusted him with the sport, though he was by no means sailor enough to realize his captain's incompetency.

In the course of the morning Miss Loring several times reverted to the kindness of Asa Kentle and 'Lijah Trunnel in boarding her yacht as they did at that late hour, and she praised in high terms the decision and good judgment displayed in extricating the vessel from so perilous a position. She repeatedly endeavored, but without much success, to en-

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gage Master Fairway in conversation concerning the young skipper, over whose conduct and personal appearance she seemed equally enthusiastic. The old man impressed her as being strangely uncommunicative upon the subject. He replied to each of her questions after a fashion, but vouchsafed no further information, much less any words in commendation of Asa Kentle, and was so plainly desirous of confining the talk strictly to the proposed purchase of the Point for a building site, that Miss Loring began to feel somewhat impatient at what seemed to be his eye to business exclusively. As they returned home after having satisfactorily arranged preliminaries looking towards the purchase of the entire property, she resolved once more to try and ascertain certain definite facts concerning the young man in whom she now felt so interested.

“Mr. Fairway,” she began at the first opportunity when her friends were out of hearing, “I wish to tell you exactly why I am so desirous of knowing further about this young man. I am without a captain for the yacht now, as you know, and must find one immediately. If I build a house here, as now seems likely, it would be very nice to have a captain and perhaps a crew as well, who lived here, and were perfectly familiar with this part of the coast. I have n’t any idea how much of an income Captain

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Kentle and his men get from their fishing business, but the work, I have understood, is very hard, and perhaps they could be induced to go yachting for part of the year, at least. I think I should feel much more secure in cruising with him and some such men as his, than with the man who has just gone, and the motley crew he brought with him from New York. Now I wish very much you would be kind enough to tell me very plainly if you know of any reason whatever why he would not be a desirable man for master of my yacht, provided I can make it worth his while to take her."

Master Fairway was evidently much at a loss to know how to reply to this direct question.

"He is n't intemperate, is he?" the young lady asked, noticing his hesitation.

"No, indeed, he is n't, not the least bit!" cried Clara Fairway, into whose pretty face the telltale blood had already mounted.

"No, no, marm, I'll say that much for him," said Obed Fairway. "He ain't noways a drinkin' man, and he's good and able to put your yacht any place on this coast where you'll want to go to, and fetch her back in good shape, too, but I wisht to God you had n't ast me no sich a question, Miss Lorin'. The Lord knows I don't want to do Asy Kentle no manner of hurt, but bein' as you've

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turned to and ast me what you have, all the way ever I can do, as I see, is to tell you jest what I know, for I ain't no kind of hand to back and fill. Clarry, gal, you take and step ahead along o' them others a short spell, can't ye?"

"No, uncle, I think I'd much better stay right here," said Clara stoutly.

"Oh, I'm so sorry if my question has brought up anything unpleasant!" exclaimed Miss Loring, for the first time noticing the girl's perturbed expression. "Do please excuse me, and consider that I never asked it at all, won't you?"

"I want you to hear just what uncle has to say about Asy — about Captain Kentle," Clara said earnestly. "If you stay any time in this place you will be sure to hear it, and then perhaps there won't be any one present to defend him!" she added proudly.

Master Fairway then proceeded to give Miss Loring a concise account of the well-known drowning affair, together with his chief reasons for believing Asa Kentle guilty.

"Oh, but this is a dreadful thing!" his hearer exclaimed, as the old man concluded. "If I understand the circumstances rightly, Mr. Fairway, I certainly think you do wrong to believe this of him!" and at these words Clara gave her a grateful

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look. "You admit that his character has always been of the best, and that you yourself were very fond of him; in fact, that he was almost like a son to you. I think you should certainly have taken his word for it, in spite of everything else. Aren't vessels' figure-heads sometimes torn off by the waves? It seems to me I have heard of it."

"Yes 'm, they be so; there ain't a thing onray tionable about that part of it," the old man frankly admitted. "But his vessel's whole stem-piece was nigh gone, you see. It was all spawled up the wust way, and a couple of five-eighth bolts was crippled in good shape; one on 'em was tweaked clean 'round sideways like. I been to work on vessels one way and another now for goin' on sixty years' time, and I ain't anyways scairt to take my oath that stem struck something consid'ble solid and a master clip, too. Then again, there's the green painted chunk of cypress wood, and the greer paint on the bob-stay,—oh, Lord you, marm, it ain't no good a-talkin', not the fust mite! Women folks ain't anyways posted up on sich matters, and 't ain't hardly nach'al they should understand jes how black the thing doos appear. I can't for the life of me look at it no different from what I do. I've tried to, to the best of my knowin', but there! That's all the way ever I can look at it, to save me!"

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“Still, uncle,” said Clara Fairway, “you know well there are numbers of men in the harbor, and good sailors, too, who never will believe that Asy Kentle ever did such a thing. Take Cap’n Trunnel, for instance. He says Asy may have struck the shay after she had been cut down by some other vessel, and the ballast spilled out of her. You know he says she may have been floating about for an hour before John Ed Clueline ever saw her. It was a dreadful storm that came on that day, and in the midst of it they might not have noticed striking her, especially as she was empty.”

Master Fairway made no reply, but leaned heavily against a tree, and slowly shook his head.

“Cap’n Trunnel says the Good Intent’s stem was shaky, anyway,” Clara continued, “and that it would n’t have taken much to carry it away. At any rate, he has said from the very first that Asy Kentle never cut those men down, and that nothing on earth would ever make him believe it, either. Even if he saw him do it, he says he would n’t believe it, because then he should think he had gone crazy himself!”

“Captain Trunnel is the kind of friend worth having, is n’t he?” Miss Loring interposed.

“Oh, yes, yes,” said Master Fairway wearily, “Lijah Trunnel always was jes’ so set about

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everything, but he's got so now you can't talk sense along of him at all, and it's no good tryin'."

"Well, then, there's Elder Rowland," Clara persisted. "I've heard you say more than once that he is one of the smartest men you ever saw in your life, and that he is worth all the other preachers we ever had here put together. He's been to sea, too, and knows all about vessels, and he told me himself that it seemed perfectly wicked to think such a thing of Asy Kentle."

"Oh, wall, yes, I know the Elder feels a good deal that way," sighed Uncle Obed. "'T ain't only a few months sence Asy rescued him, and he can't forgit it. Had n't ought to, I s'pose, neither."

"How was that?" Miss Loring asked. "Did Captain Kentle save some one's life?"

"Yes, indeed, he did!" Clara replied eagerly. "He jumped overboard from his vessel to save Elder Rowland, — that's the minister who is here now. Elder Rowland was knocked overboard by a block which struck his head in a storm, and hurt him terribly. He was completely stunned by it, and would have been drowned without the least doubt, for all their dories were frozen together on deck and could n't be launched."

"Why, did it happen in winter?" asked Miss Loring.

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“It was right after Christmas, and one of the coldest snaps we had that season,” Clara answered. “I suppose perhaps the water had n’t become quite as cold as it was later, but the thermometer was away down below zero that day, and it was blowing a gale. He only had part of his crew with him, too.”

“What in the world was the minister doing with them on the water at such a time as that?”

“It was when he first came,” Clara said. “They were bringing him over from the Cape in the Good Intent because the steamer was n’t running. She did n’t dare try it that morning, I guess, or else she was broken down, or something. At any rate, she did n’t run that day; but when it’s necessary to go on the water, Asy Kentle is n’t apt to pay much attention to the weather. I just want to tell you what he did winter before last; that was the year they bought the Good Intent. A young boy here in the village blew his arm almost off while gunning. The doctor had been called down to Thrumbcap, and could n’t get back on account of the ice. Every boat and vessel in this harbor was frozen in solidly, and one of the heaviest northeast snowstorms we ever knew was raging, so that the roads in all directions were completely blocked by drifts. Asy Kentle with his crew and a number of

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others worked from noontime till night as hard as ever they could work cutting the Good Intent clear with axes and ice-chisels. Then they carried that poor boy out on board, and started for the Cape after it was pitch dark, and just as thick-a-snow as ever it was in this world, too! Everybody here said then that no one but Asy Kentle would have tried such a thing, but he did, and he got that boy into a doctor's hands just barely in time to save his life. Does that seem much as though he would murder two young fellows for stealing a few fish?" Clara Fairway asked, with eyes flashing through her tears.

"Indeed it does not!" Miss Loring cried. "Why, I feel as though it would be an honor to have him on my craft! Mr. Fairway, I do hope you will think better of your decision in this matter! A man should n't be loath to acknowledge himself wrong, especially in a case like this one!"

"'T ain't that at all, marm; I only wisht I could see my way to," Master Fairway said sadly.

"I am very sure you are wronging this young man deeply," Miss Loring went on. "At the very least, he ought to have the benefit of the doubt" —

"But I can't see no sort of a doubt!" Obed interrupted.

"It seems that others can, though," the young lady said. "You are certainly bringing a great

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deal of trouble upon him, and on your niece, too, I'm afraid!"

Here Miss Loring gently drew Clara Fairway's arm within her own, and gave her an affectionate look which plainly showed that she knew very nearly how matters stood.

"We ought to go now, I think," said she, and so they walked along arm in arm, Uncle Obed lagging a few steps behind, with a more dejected look than usual upon his furrowed old face.

At the house they stopped, intending to consult a certain deed relating to the property in question. Immediately on turning in at the gate, Mrs. Fairway suddenly opened the front door.

"Well there, father!" she exclaimed, "I *am* some glad you've got back! Elder Rowland, he's been settin' here waitin' to see you for the longest time, with a piece of news you wouldn't never guess from now till doomsday!"

XIV

THE CLOUD LIFTED

SINCE going to board with Joel Kentle, Laban Rowland had talked many times with him concerning the loss of the Spurling brothers, but without eliciting any new facts. He had also seen all the other members of the schooner's crew, with the exception of Robert Glynn, who he early learned had left his home at the Cape to look for employment inland. None of the men were in the least disposed to connect him with the affair, however, for, according to the invariable account, the snow-squall did not strike the vessel until the last dory was in the act of leaving her, and Glynn had begun the attempt to pick them up again almost immediately.

On returning home from his last visit to the Cape in the Good Intent, Joel Kentle mentioned having heard while lying there that Robert Glynn was again at home and seriously ill. As the result of much reflection over the matter, the minister had recently come to the definite conclusion that Glynn must certainly be able to clear up the mys-

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tery. From careful study of all the evidence possible to obtain, it appeared that there were a few brief moments of that eventful forenoon not yet positively accounted for, though in following up his close inquiries into the matter, Rowland was most careful to give no hint of his own now settled conviction that, even during the short time while left alone in charge of the vessel, Robert Glynn had exclusive opportunity to do the deed. Mr. Rowland had long intended to hunt up Glynn's whereabouts at the earliest possible occasion, but recent events at the Harbor had prevented earlier attention to the project.

Parish affairs now seemed at least temporarily adjusted, and hearing that Glynn had returned to the Cape, Rowland lost no time in further investigating a matter which seemed to him second to none in importance. Saying nothing as to the object of his journey, on the day when Miss Loring's yacht arrived at the Harbor, he took passage for the Cape in the able steamer *Conqueror*, which favorite craft was so recently from her spring overhauling that the finger-marks of most subsequent passengers were registered upon her new white paint with startling distinctness.

Robert Glynn's home in the lower part of the town was found without difficulty, but the worn-

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looking young woman who answered his knock at the door informed him that her brother was not in condition to be seen ; that he was far gone in quick consumption, and according to the doctors had but a very short time to live.

At this news, Laban Rowland's resolution to probe the matter most thoroughly was not a little shaken, and had the matter been one in which he alone was concerned, probably the attempt would have been abandoned. Under the circumstances, however, Rowland felt justified in pushing his request for a short interview with the sick man. He introduced himself, and was proceeding to explain to the pale-faced young woman that his errand was of the utmost importance, when a weak voice issued from a bedroom on the lower floor of the tenement. The woman at once withdrew, but after a few moments' absence returned with word that her brother would see the visitor.

Glynn's appearance certainly indicated that he was not long for this world, and though sure that he was but doing his duty, the minister experienced fresh qualms of conscience as he saw the pitiable form lying upon the bed before him in the poorly furnished little room.

At a sign from her brother, the woman left the two men together, and in the fewest possible words

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Rowland then explained the object of his visit. He told Robert Glynn of the great trouble brought upon Asa Kentle and others through his supposed connection with the green shay disaster, and besought him with great earnestness to assist if possible in clearing Asa of what he felt positive was a most unjust and cruel charge.

The sick man listened passively until the minister paused.

“I mistrusted your errant acrost here soon’s ever I heard you tellin’ my sister who you was!” he said with evident difficulty. “I’m glad enough you come over acrost, though, Elder. They tell me I’ve got pretty nigh through myself, though come to that, they ain’t need to tell me of it. I see you think I’m the one that done the job, Elder, and you’re right. I done it, and I ain’t had a minute’s peace of my life since, neither! I heard tell once or twice that some of ’em over to the Harbor kind of wanted to blame it off onto Asy Kentle, — they done that some little before ever I left the vessel, but I never once misdoubted but what the thing had all blowed over months ago. Folks same’s them Spurlings have dropped out ’round here quite a few times to my own knowin’, and no great of anything been said about it afterwards, neither, and I supposed likely that’s how it had worked this time.

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I never quit the vessel because I was much of any scairt of havin' the thing blamed onto me, Elder, for if anybody cal'lated to pick it up, I was dead sure nobody seen me do it that day. All the reason ever I come to quit was that stoppin' aboard that vessel kept me nerved up 'all the time till I like to have gone crazy over it. Seems's though I'd be seein' and hearin' them two in oilskins wavin' their arms and hollerin' at me day and night, till I jest could n't stand it to stop aboard no longer!

"If only I'd once knowed of this trouble, I would tried to clear Asy someways before this, but he was consid'ble put out with me on account of my leavin' him that way, and I ain't never seen him since, not even to pass the time o' day. Asy Kentle is one out of a thousand, Elder, and I'm awful sorry ever he's had to shoulder this the way you say!"

Glynn had several times been obliged to pause for breath, and at this point seemed completely exhausted. His voice failed to such an extent that Rowland had much difficulty in catching the last words.

"Mr. Glynn," he said, leaning close over the bed after a few moments' pause, "if I can get a justice, will you make a deposition, — that is, will you swear that the Spurlings were run down while

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you were alone upon the schooner? That will be the surest and quickest way to clear Asa Kentle."

Robert Glynn nodded assent.

"Do you want I should swear I done it a-purpose?" he asked faintly.

"Why, did you do it on purpose? I took it for granted it was an accident," the minister exclaimed.

"'T wa'n't!" said Glynn with a groan. "I wisht to God it was, but it wa'n't, and that's the truth! If you can't clear Asy Kentle without I swear to that, I'll do it, for I'm past hangin' now, I guess, but on account of sister here, and a few others of 'em, I'd sooner have it called an accident. I feel a sight better about it, though, Elder, to tell you right out that I done it a-purpose. I never once cal'lated to do no such a thing. It come over me all of a sudden like, just at the very last secont's time, for them two had been robbin' our trawls right along steady all winter; but my God! I was sorry the very minute I done it, and I ain't had no peace of my life since! Don't let on to folks that I done it a-purpose though, Elder, not without you have to. I've wanted to own up to this thing time and time again, and all the reason I never is on account of my sister!"

"Your sister shall never know that it was n't an accident, my poor fellow!" Rowland said.

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"The rest of it shall always remain a secret with me."

"You better look around and get a justice pretty quick, Elder, for there 's no tellin' how much leeway you 've got left," said the sick man. "Seems 't though I might be getting through 'most any minute now, and I shall feel easier to have this all set right first."

Although Robert Glynn's condition undoubtedly suggested the need of haste in the matter of securing a justice or notary, Laban Rowland then knelt by the bedside and offered a heartfelt prayer in behalf of the man whose wasted hand, even as he spoke, gratefully closed over one of his own in a feeble grasp. As he ceased, there came a low knock at the door, and Glynn's sister announced that the doctor was waiting to see his patient.

Rowland at once took leave, and, meeting the doctor in the next room, was introduced to him. Presently inquiring where the nearest justice of the peace or notary public was to be found, the doctor told him that he himself held the latter office. As quickly as possible Rowland then explained the situation, and at the close of half an hour was able to depart with a precious document which he felt sure would bring joy to many friends at Kentle's Harbor.

The steamer Conqueror, as already stated, had

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but a few days before resumed trips after her usual patching up for the summer season. Among quantities of other flaming handbills constantly blowing about the dirty streets, or stuck in layers upon fences and lamp-posts throughout the town, were now to be seen those bearing the customary spring announcement that the stanch sea-going steamer Conqueror, having been rebuilt and refitted at great expense, would on a certain day resume regular service. Owing, however, to a fresh leak in her boiler-tubes which obstinately refused to be cured through the usual absorption of horse-manure, carefully collected in the streets by the engineer for the purpose, communication with Kentle's Harbor and other points was again interrupted. Rather than wait longer, early next morning Laban Rowland hired a stable team and was driven directly to Master Fairway's house at the Harbor. He at once told Mrs. Fairway of his successful visit to the Cape, and awaited the return of Clara and her uncle with what patience he could command.

Miss Mary Loring was anxious to meet the minister of whom she had been hearing during the morning, but supposing that he had urgent business with Master Fairway, decided to follow and join her friends at once, instead of stopping as she intended.

The old man excused himself and went indoors

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immediately, leaving the two young women talking for a few moments together by the gate. Miss Loring was about to leave when Obed Fairway appeared at the door, and excitedly urged them both to come in at once.

"Elder," he said in an unsteady voice as they entered the room, "you take and tell 'em what you 've found out."

Mr. Rowland glanced up at Clara Fairway inquiringly.

"Oh, excuse *me* !" she cried. "Elder Rowland, make you acquainted with my friend Miss Loring."

Rowland bowed, but still seemed undecided what to do.

"Start in, Elder, start in !" Master Fairway said. "Miss Lorin' she knows all about this matter. She thinks poor enough of me a'ready, but Lord only knows what she 'll think soon 's ever she comes to hear what you 've got to tell !"

"What I have to tell is soon told !" said the minister. "It 's simply that I 've been able to clear Asa Kentle most positively of all connection whatever with the drowning of those Spurlings." As Rowland said this, Clara Fairway's lips parted, and her eyes became fixed upon his face with almost painfully rapt attention. "I 've just come back from the Cape, where Robert Glynn lies at the

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point of death," he went on. "Glynn left the schooner very soon after the affair, you remember, and is the only one of the crew with whom I have n't talked the matter over a good many times. Of late it has seemed to me more and more that he must certainly be able to shed some light on it, though no others of the crew have even hinted as much. Always when I've inquired very closely into it in order to try and get at just how long a time Glynn was alone on board the vessel that morning, they have declared it was but a very few moments, — some even have insisted at first that he was in sight all the time, and that he had any chance to do the deed was out of the question.

"But as I have argued it to myself, after the heavy snow-squall struck, each man in the different dories had more than he could attend to in looking after himself for some minutes, and I don't think any of them realized how long a time really elapsed before Asa Kentle's dory was picked up by Glynn. It's certain that none of them really know definitely whether the schooner was at any time out of sight of all the dories or not. The men all are inclined to give Glynn much credit for handling the vessel alone so successfully, and insist that no one could have begun the work of picking them up under such circumstances any sooner than he did. I

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don't think there has been any undue disposition to shield Glynn from the suspicion of knowing something about the matter, — they have really thought it absurd to suppose that he had any chance to do the deed unseen that morning.

“However,” said Rowland, unfolding a sheet of paper he held in his hand, “here is a declaration from Robert Glynn himself, which settles the whole matter beyond a doubt.

““State of —, County of —, 19—.

““On this 30th day of April, 19—, I, Robert Glynn of Cape —, being fully conscious that I have but a short time to live, and being anxious before I die to make a declaration which I deem just with respect to the living, and to relieve my mind of a great burden, do upon oath depose and say as follows: That on the 4th day of January, 19—, while left alone in charge of the schooner Good Intent, of Kentle's Harbor, she was struck by a heavy squall of wind and blinding snow, and thereby for some minutes rendered unmanageable. In the midst of this squall, a small fishing boat, known as a shay, containing Abram and Elmer Spurling of Thrumbcap Island, Kentle's Harbor, was run down and sunk by said schooner Good Intent, and said Abram and Elmer Spurling were drowned. I further declare that to the best of my

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knowledge and belief neither Asa Kentle, master of said schooner, nor any member of his crew, witnessed the affair, or were in any way cognizant that the said Spurlings came to their death in the manner above set forth.

“ ‘Sworn to and subscribed before me the day and year above named.

“ ‘ERASTUS L. BURNS, N. Public.’ ”

There was not a dry eye in the room as Laban Rowland laid the paper on the table, and with great show of care began to wipe his glasses. Embraced jointly by her aunt and her new found friend Miss Loring, for some moments Clara Fairway sobbed audibly, while Uncle Obed rose, and, with his back turned, stared steadily from the window. Suddenly, without once looking up, he stepped to the back door and went out.

“ Where you goin’ to now, father ? ” his wife called, starting after him.

“ I ain’t goin’ fur ! ” came the answer.

Watching closely, Mrs. Fairway saw him draw the white painted oars from their hiding-place beneath the steps, and with downcast eyes start towards the shore by the path among the apple-trees.

“ Why, Obed, you ! ” she cried again. “ Don’t go traipsin’ off at this hour ! It’s most noontime a’ready, and we’ve got a b’iled dinner, too ! ”

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“I ain’t goin’ fur!” he replied once more.

Mrs. Fairway turned back into the house. “I don’t see what should possess him to start off that way!” she said rather anxiously. Then she went to the window.

“Why, good land! There’s the Good Intent come back!” she exclaimed. “I guess likely Asy only went out and set¹ this mornin’, and never stopped to haul no trawls at all. Your uncle is rowin’ right straight out aboard of him, Clarry Fairway, — that’s jest the very place where he’s goin’ to! Well, there, I never! Good land, I shall give up! He could n’t stop for no dinner, but must put it right off aboard of Asy the very first thing he doos! He cal’lates to fetch Asy back here along of him, now you see if he don’t!”

What passed between Master Fairway and Skipper Asa Kentle, those on shore never knew exactly. Through a much battered spyglass Mrs. Fairway watched her husband row his great dory out directly alongside the Good Intent. She reported to the others that Asa had come on deck; that they were talking together; that all the men were gathering close about them, and at length that Master Fairway was shaking hands, first with Asa, and then with the others on deck. Soon after this, both

¹ Set trawls.

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men were seen to embark in the dory, which, under Asa's vigorous strokes, rapidly approached the shore.

Miss Loring then suddenly remembered that her friends were still waiting for her somewhere down the road, and Rowland, too, discovered that he had barely time to reach home in season for the noon-day meal. Declining a pressing invitation to stay and partake of Master Fairway's favorite b'iled dinner, they left the house together but a few moments before the two men reached it.

If in the early days of their estrangement there had been times when Asa Kentle and Clara Fairway felt a temporary resentment at each other's conduct, there were certainly no traces of any such feeling at present. On the contrary, they had long since begun to reproach themselves with various forms of injustice, and being now fully ripe for reconciliation, once more came together in the frankest possible manner.

Obed Fairway seemed to have grown several years younger during his brief absence from the house, and it was plain that the serious breach between him and Asa had been completely closed.

"I done wrong by ye, as it turns out, Asy dear," he said, "but same time that was all the way ever I could see to do, and prob'ly I would do jest the

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same way again. All is, I hope you ain't going to always and forever be feelin' sideways towards me on account of it. The best advice I can give you and Clarry now is jest to take and hitch up quick 's ever you can, afore ever there 's any more sich works to come up and make trouble betwixt ye. You ain't no need to wait to build, you know, — come right in here along of the woman and me, and stop as long as ever you want. 'T won't be anyways long now afore us old folks will be called aft, and then the whole place will be yourn ! ”

Uncle Obed's plan of an early marriage seemed to meet with favor in the eyes of the two most directly interested, and before snow again flew in Kentle's Harbor, the Rev. Laban Rowland was called upon to perform the ceremony, at which Miss Mary Loring took much pains to be present.

Meanwhile Asa Kentle sold the Good Intent and took command of the yacht, where most of the old schooner's crew followed him. In the early winter a newer and larger fishing schooner was bought, though Asa himself remained on shore during the first few months of his married life.

Miss Loring's yacht was wintered at Kentle's Harbor, and Asa's time seemed pretty well occupied in looking after her and the great stone house which his employer began to erect on Fairway's

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Point during the summer. In this house the sister of Robert Glynn eventually found permanent employment. Captain 'Lijah Trunnel's services, too, were in frequent demand on board the yacht, where next season the attention of visitors was often called to numerous examples of the old seaman's rare dexterity with needle and marlinspike.

Miss Mary Loring early began to take an unusual interest in the affairs of the church at the Harbor, and as her acquaintance with Laban Rowland deepened into strong admiration and friendship, she quietly claimed the privilege of assisting in furnishing means needed in carrying out certain of his plans for helping the people of the old community, largely through providing profitable employment for both mind and body.

For many generations the bugaboo of literal hell-fire had been held constantly before the young and old of Kentle's Harbor, with the indisputable result that, while apparently never yet in so much danger from it, they were at the same time never in so little dread of it. Their fears and their selfishness had each been played upon incessantly without any lasting effect. The old cry of "To cover! Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost!" had undoubtedly lost its potency among them, and revivals had long since ceased to revive at the Harbor.

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Laban Rowland was above all else a helper, and he fell to work in a way that from the first attracted through its very novelty. If he considered the great majority of his hearers booked for damnation, the conviction was thus far known only to himself, and he religiously avoided urging them to lead better lives simply as a means of escaping future punishment. Rowland believed in and preached the goodness of God, and at the same time gathered followers in the vicinity by steadily presenting the to them strange example of a young, vigorous, and educated man, abundantly able to earn a much better living at other work, but actually taking up the ministry "at this day of the world" from a sense of duty. Many at first scoffed at the bare idea of so unlikely a thing, but the fact at length seemed to be generally accepted.

This parson, at least, they grew to realize, was no mere stripling coming for a little practice at preaching and a good deal of recreation during the summer months ; neither was he a physical wreck nor a mental cripple, nor so old as to command but the beggarly salary offered. He was in the prime of life, and his health was undeniably of the best. In dead earnest he boldly denounced wrong-doing wherever he saw it, truckling to nobody. And most astonishing of all, at the time when it appeared that

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even his absurdly small salary would be cut down more than one half, and the meeting-house itself taken away from him, the Rev. Laban Rowland was prepared to remain and continue at his own expense the great work he had undertaken.

What Laban Rowland is doing in Kentle's Harbor, proper men may do with comparatively slight financial assistance in many other remote places in equally desperate need of help. That there is, especially of late years, a great and constantly increasing call for such men and work in many parts of old New England, no one who will honestly investigate can deny. To more than one recent dumfounded seeker after stubborn facts in the matter has come the overpowering conviction that the exigencies of our own neglected kith and kin at home are at present more pressing than those of the heathen in far distant lands.

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